Hafa Adai!

Superior Court judges recuse from suit vs DPS chief. PAGE 2
Biden, DOT announce $24M for the CNMI. PAGE 3

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Saipan Tribune

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3 COVID-related deaths in NMI

AT A GLANCE

As of 8:18pm, Feb. 27, 2022

VACCINATIONS IN THE CNMI

Eligible Population Additional Dose Vaccinated: 56.6%

Days since last community transmission: 1

Pfizer/BioNTech	
Initiated:	38,017
Fully Vaccinated:	37,139
Moderna	
Initiated:	5,332
Fully Vaccinated:	5,196
Janssen	
Fully vaccinated:	1,139
Additional Dose:	21,128

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	43,836	508[1]	44,344
Recovered	40,052	91	40,143
Active	3,371	508	3,879
Deaths	321	1	322

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	9,108	543[2]	9,595
Recovered	8,134	504	8,638
Active	384	543	927
Deaths	27	3	30

[1]2/27=106; 2/26=127; 2/25-275
[2]2/27=117; 2/26=130; 1/25=139; 2/24=157

Source: Joint Information Center – Guam, Commonwealth Healthcare Corp., https://www.vaccinatecnmi.com/vax-dashboard/

COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

LEGEND:
- **Red:** Least safe
- **Orange**
- **Yellow**
- **Blue**
- **Green:** Safest

Source: Office of the Governor

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. have confirmed three COVID-19-related death, bringing to 30 the CNMI's death toll from the pandemic.

CHCC first reported the CNMI's 28th and 29th COVID-19-related death in a news release last Friday, followed by another fatality last night, the CNMI's 30th. As has become CHCC's standard procedure, the news releases gave no additional details.

This comes as the CNMI recorded a combined 543 new cases of COVID-19, bringing the CNMI total to 9,595 cases since March 26, 2020. The vaccination statuses of the 543 cases are pending verification.

In Guam, the Joint Information Center was notified that the territory's 322nd COVID-19-related fatality was pronounced dead on arrival at the Guam Memorial Hospital on Feb. 25, 2022. The patient was a 71-year-old female, unvaccinated, with underlying health conditions who tested positive on Feb. 25.

"Jeff, Josh, and I offer our heartfelt condolences and

See NMI on Page 4

CDC: Healthy Americans can now take a break from masks

By CARLA K. JOHNSON and MIKE STOBBE
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Most Americans live in places where healthy people, including students in schools, can safely take a break from wearing masks under new U.S. guidelines released Friday.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention outlined the new set of measures for communities where COVID-19 is easing its grip, with less of a focus on positive test results and more on what's happening at hospitals.

The new system greatly changes the look of the CDC's risk map and puts more than 70% of the U.S. population in counties where the coronavirus is posing a low or medium threat to hospitals. Those are the people who can stop wearing masks, the agency said.

The agency is still advising people, including schoolchildren, to wear masks where the risk of COVID-19 is high. That's the situation in about

See CDC on Page 4

See SAIPAN on Page 4

Saipan channel surveyed for US assets from WWII

IMAGE COURTESY OF SCRIPPS INSTITUTION OF OCEANOGRAPHY.

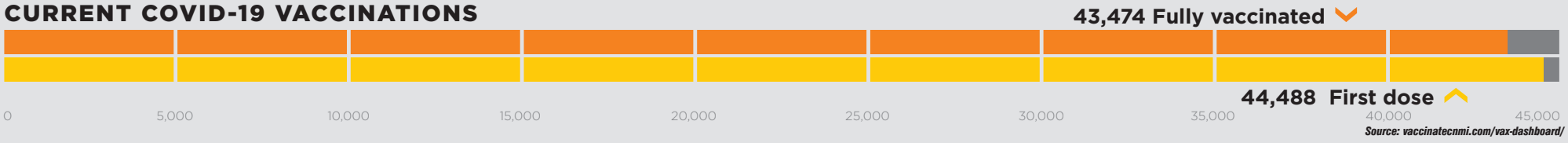
During the Deepwater Surveys of World War II U.S. Cultural Assets in the Saipan Channel expedition the team will conduct surveys using a REMUS 600 autonomous underwater vehicle, like the one shown here being deployed in 2021. The REMUS 600 can carry a suite of sensors, including sidescan sonar and a low-light camera system, and will reach depths as great as 600 meters (1,968 feet).

From Feb. 24 to March 11, 2022, a team of researchers will explore the waters off Tinian and Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands to locate and document U.S. warplanes lost during World War II.

Tinian and Saipan served as major air bases during the final year of World War II, with B-29 bombers flying long-range missions to Japan. Many aircraft were lost on take off and landing. The lost aircraft have great significance to American history, yet the final resting places of these B-

Joltin' Josie the Pacific Pioneer was the first B-29 bomber to enter the Pacific Theater of World War II. The aircraft was lost off Saipan on April 1, 1945. The team will search for the aircraft wreck site during the Deepwater Surveys of World War II U.S. Cultural Assets in the Saipan Channel expedition. Image courtesy of NOAA Ocean Exploration Deepwater Surveys of World War II U.S. Cultural Assets in the Saipan Channel.

CURRENT COVID-19 VACCINATIONS



Source: vaccinatecnmi.com/vax-dashboard/

INSIDE

NATION
One man is killed after 14 people were shot during a party at a Las Vegas hookah lounge.

» PAGE x

WORLD
Street fighting broke out in Kharkiv as Russian troops pushed into Ukraine's second-largest city.

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LIFE & STYLE
Kim Kardashian has asked a court to ignore Ye's attempts to slow down their divorce.

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Local

All five Superior Court judges recuse from suit vs DPS chief

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

All five Superior Court judges have recused themselves from hearing CNMI Attorney General Edward Manibusan's lawsuit against Department of Public Safety Commissioner Robert Guerrero for the excessive overtime compensation he received during Super Typhoon Yutu recovery.

Superior Court Presiding Judge Roberto Naraja, and associate judges Wesley Bogdan, Kenneth Govendo, Joseph Camacho, and Teresa Kim-Tenorio all issued orders of recusal in the AG's lawsuit against the DPS chief.

Naraja stated in his recusal order that there is a conflict of interest and cannot hear the case because Guerrero is his godbrother.

Kim-Tenorio recused herself due to a conflict of interest because she worked with Guerrero in the development of the CNMI Superior Court Drug Court program.

Bogdan, Govendo, and Camacho also claimed there was a conflict of interest in hearing this case but did not go into much detail in their orders.

Manibusan, in his official capacity as attorney general of the CNMI, has filed a lawsuit with the Superior Court against Guerrero for allegedly receiving excessive overtime compensation during the CNMI's recovery from Super Typhoon Yutu, which hit the CNMI in October 2018.

According to Manibusan, Guerrero was not entitled to overtime compensation; he asked the court to order Guerrero to return all the money he was paid in overtime.

Manibusan claims that Guerrero's total compensation in fiscal years 2019 and 2020 exceeded his statutory salary of $54,000, which is against the law.

In his lawsuit, as relief, Manibusan is asking the court to issue a judgment of $46,982.96 for recovery of unlawful typhoon premium payments, overtime payments, or extra payments not authorized by law, without valid appropriation, and in excess of the salary ceiling.

The AG also wants the court to order Guerrero to pay pre-judgment and post-judgment interest; costs of suit; and all other relief the court deems appropriate.

Aside from monetary relief, the AG also asks the court to issue a declaratory judgment declaring that the personnel regulations authorizing payment of typhoon emergency premium pay, overtime, and extra pay do not apply to gubernatorial appointees; that the director of Personnel and governor lack the authority to authorize additional compensation except as provided by law; and that compensation in excess of the salary ceiling cannot be authorized except as provided by law.

STATE OF THE US COLONIES PANEL

Gonzales defends indigenous ownership

By IVA MAURIN
CORRESPONDENT

"Absolute sovereignty does not mean that we should relinquish our timeless, decades-millennial-generation-old connection, irreparable connection, unequivocal connection, unconditional, inseparable connection to our land, water, sea, and air."

Thus said Northern Marianas Descent Corporation president John Gonzales last Friday, Feb. 25, as he joined leaders from American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands on a discussion, hosted by the Power4PuertoRico Coalition, on the State of the US Colonies.

Speaking to "defend the rights of indigenous ownership," Gonzales talked about the execution of the Covenant (U.S. Public Law 94-21, where the Northern Mariana Islands became a Commonwealth, in political union with the United States), particularly on the military use of the land.

Sablan

"In that covenant, it says that two-thirds of Tinian and just a little bit of acreage of the piers in Tanapag Harbor will be used as staging grounds for the United States to build and do training, strategic practices, for its military defense on forward," Gonzales said.

"Lest we forget, the United States has used our islands as dumping grounds for UXOs (unexploded ordnance) and to this date, the United States has reneged on its moral obligation to clean our islands of the military dump and waste that litter through our islands," he added.

Gonzales said the NMDC, in a show of resistance, alongside other nonprofit organizations, have worked, fought, and sued the United States in federal courts for environmental justice.

"They promise us that they're going to consult with us—free, prior and informed consent. The fact of the matter is in our indigenous cultures, putting up a CD worth thousands and thousands of pages, putting it up on online platforms for people to review it without face-to-face consultation, is an insult," Gonzales said. "[It] is a smack on the authenticity of the United States because our culture requires that we sit together and confer and consult and discuss and dialogue and discourse, and then amicably reach a decision. That has never been the case. …We need to at least get down to the basics and confirm and consult with free, prior and informed consent."

The NMDC president also called on those who call the islands home to reach out to policymakers, leaders, and other nonprofit organizations, adding that the territories need to have a seat at the table to get the chance to correct the wrongs that have been systematically practiced and deliberately done by the United States.

"It is only until we hold hands and become inseparable can we…educate and make the United States informed… but more importantly, that we finally get the chance to truly, authentically, ingeniously, exercise our right to self-determination that respects our cultural, indigenous, tribal connection to our land, air, sea, and water."

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US pledges $1.14B for transportation projects in territories

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP)—The U.S. government announced Thursday that it would invest $1.14 billion to repair and rebuild highways, roads and bridges in Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories.

Over the next five years, Puerto Rico would receive more than $900 million while the U.S. territories of Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands would receive $240 million.

"These funds will help make life better," said Stephanie Pollack, deputy administrator of the U.S. Federal Highway Administration.

Puerto Rico is scheduled to receive $173 million in the first year and the other U.S. territories a total of nearly $46 million.

Puerto Rico Gov. Pedro Pierluisi said the money would be used for construction projects, guardrails, reflectors, lighting, signage and other things.

The announcement comes one day after a federal control board overseeing Puerto Rico's finances released a fiscal plan for the island's Highways and Transportation Authority in which it recommended a more than 8% yearly increase in tolls through fiscal year 2024 to improve road conditions.

The board stated that only 13% of Puerto Rico's highways are in good condition, compared with a median of 84% in the U.S. mainland. It also noted that the island's road fatality rates are more than 40% higher than the U.S. median.

Biden, DOT announce $24M for the CNMI

WASHINGTON—The Biden Administration and the U.S. Department of Transportation announced Thursday last week more than $1.14 billion to repair and rebuild roads and bridges for U.S. territories—American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands—and Puerto Rico under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The total amount being made available to Puerto Rico and the U.S. territories in fiscal year 2022 is $219 million.

» Bipartisan Infrastructure Law delivers over 14% increase in funding to repair and rebuild roads and bridges

The historic legislation will improve life for residents and create good-paying jobs and economic growth. Specifically, it will help repair and rebuild roads and bridges with a focus on climate change mitigation, resilience, equity, and safety for all users, including cyclists and pedestrians.

"This funding will greatly support the territories to improve their highway networks, stimulate economic opportunity and increase highway safety," deputy federal highway administrator Stephanie Pollack said. "Today's funding will help move forward major repairs to highways and bridges and improve transportation systems on these islands."

Over the five years of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the CNMI will receive $24 million. In fiscal year 2022, it will receive $4.6 million in funding to pay for critical infrastructure needs.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will provide over a 14% increase in funding for Puerto Rico and the territories compared to the funding provided in the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act. In fiscal year 2022, FHWA will provide $173 million in funding for Puerto Rico and a total of nearly $46 million for four U.S. territories.

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century of 1998 established the Puerto Rico Highway Program. The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1970 created the Territorial Highway Program, and subsequent legislation continued the program. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law continues to provide dedicated funding to assist each territory in the construction and improvement of a system of arterial and collector highways, and necessary inter-island connectors. ***(PR)***

GCEA 2021 ANNUAL REPORT CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Governor's Council of Economic Advisers, led by co-chairmen Gov. Ralph DLG Torres, front row third left, and Jerry Tan, front row third right, join the Governor's Cabinet members and GCEA council members for a photo after presenting the GCEA 2021 Annual Report and 2022 Outlook last Feb. 25 at the Governor's Office on Capitol Hill. The presentation focused on the GCEA's 2021 accomplishments, an overview of the Marianas economy, and the opportunities and upcoming activities of the GCEA in 2022. A digital copy of the 2021 Annual Report is available to view or download at cnmieconomy.com/reports.

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Full Senate expected to adopt Rules of Impeachment today

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The full Senate is expected to adopt today, Monday, the 28-page Rules of Impeachment that two joint Senate committees adopted Friday for the trial of Gov. Ralph DLG Torres, who was impeached by the Democrat-controlled House of Representatives for alleged commission of felonies, corruption, and neglect of duty.

During Friday's meeting, the Senate Committee on Judiciary, Government, Law and Federal Relations, chaired by Sen. Karl R. King-Nabors (R-Tinian), and Senate Committee on Executive Appointments and Government Investigations, chaired by Sen. Francisco Q. Cruz (R-Tinian), unanimously voted to adopt the Impeachment Rules, with amendments.

Shortly after the joint committees' adoption of the Rules of Impeachment, Senate President Jude U. Hofschneider (R-Tinian) introduced Friday a resolution that seeks full Senate approval to adopt the rules.

Hofschneider also set a special session for today at 1:30pm, during which the full Senate is going to tackle the rules.

Last Jan. 12, the House of Representatives adopted House Resolution 22-14 that Rep. Celina R. Babauta (D-Saipan) introduced, impeaching Torres.

Last Jan. 27, the Senate president tasked the two joint committees to look into the impeachment resolution and formulate the rules to guide the impeachment hearing process.

Cruz presided over Friday's joint committees' meeting.

In creating the rules, King-Nabors said they took account a previous resolution provided by Sens. Paul A. Manglona (Ind-Rota) and Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan), which proposes to use in Torres' trial the Impeachment Rules of Procedure that the 18th Senate had adopted in 2013 for the impeachment of then-governor Benigno R. Fitial.

Hofschneider

King-Nabors also denied that they are trying to prolong this process. "That couldn't be further from the truth. What we really want to do is be transparent and be accountable for the information that's provided," he said.

»2 joint Senate committees adopt proposed Rules of Impeachment

He said in their proposed rules, there is a lengthy description on what the joint committees have considered to be acceptable as House impeachment records.

King-Nabors said the proposed rules also further verifies the manner by which the Senate is willing to accept House impeachment documents to avoid what's called "document dumping" that he said is a common practice in almost any jurisdictions.

"I'm just going to give you the document and it's on you now to sift through the information and figure out what is heads or tails," the senator said.

King-Nabors said their joint committees have gone through great lengths to specify and really put a fine point on how they want these documents provided to the Senate.

He said it is not because they want to be overly meticulous or want to dictate to the House anything above and beyond what is acceptable but in the spirit of expediency and transparency.

"It will only be right that we are able to accept this information in a fashion by which that we can now sift through it in a timely fashion and get to the crux of every assertion," he said.

The senator said this was missing in the previous iterations of the Impeachment Rules and that he cannot speak to that as to why.

He said their joint committees feel that this is the best course of action for them to proceed forward and to be able to go through the information and provide the best assessment of that information with regards to what is being asserted.

King-Nabors cited Rule 5 of their proposed Impeachment Rules that refers to proof of burden at the hearing, which was not present in any previous Impeachment Rules. He said they feel that it is imperative because this is now the compass that will guide the Senate in this decision.

"Not only are we hearing the evidence, but we need guidance as to what threshold has to be met to convict or acquit. And this was lacking in the previous documentation," said the senator, referring to the rules in Fitial's case.

King-Nabors also noted that what the joint committees did was make a comprehensive impeachment document that can be used not just for one individual but to provide a template for impeachment in the Executive Branch and the Judiciary.

"So this is really a comprehensive document," he said.

Sen. Victor B. Hocog (R-Rota) moved for the adoption of the Impeachment Rules. Sens. Hocog, King-Nabors, Cruz, Vinnie Sablan, and Justo Quitugua voted "yes."

House speaker responds to Senate impeachment rules

Villagomez

House Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan)), issued the following in response to the Senate Impeachment Rules released by Senate President Jude U. Hofschneider (R-Tinian) on Friday, Feb. 25, 2022:

"I have read the impeachment rules and I am troubled by the lengths to which the Senate president and the Joint Impeachment Committee have gone to hamper the House of Representatives' ability to conduct a fair trial. The people of our Commonwealth have the right to have us conduct a fair trial.

"The Senate rules present violations of the Open Government Act. The impeachment rules were adopted Friday morning without allowing oral comments on the proposed rules; rules that were withheld from the public and not made available to all members of the Senate until the close of business.

"The Senate rules go so far as to limit the House of Representatives by not giving us equal footing. It does not seem reasonable that the Senate president can handpick who will lead our impeachment prosecution and limit the number of impeachment managers to present our case. These are but two of the Senate's unreasonable rules the House cannot accept, but there are more.

"We also have fairness issues when we compare the standard of proof in the Senate impeachment rules by which the House must prove its case against the governor by making the applicable standard of proof higher than the standard set for former governor Benigno Fitial, former Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich, and former President Donald J. Trump.

"It's in the best interest to have a fair trial and it's inexplicable that the Senate would hamper our ability to perform our constitutional duties in this manner." ***(PR)***

NMI

From Page 1

prayers for her friends and family," said Guam Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero. "Although we are beginning a slow and gradual relaxing of restrictions, we are not yet free from this pandemic. Please continue to wear your mask, wash your hands, watch your distance, and get vaccinated and boosted. Together, we will beat this virus."

In the CNMI, CHCC first reported 157 cases late Thursday night, followed by 139 new cases on Friday, 130 cases on Saturday, and 117 cases last night

As of Feb. 276, 2022, there were five individuals hospitalized as a result of COVID-19, three of them vaccinated and two partially vaccinated.

Of the 117 cases reported last night, all were identified on Feb. 26, 2022. Nine were identified on Tinian and seven on Rota.

Of the 130 cases reported last Saturday, 125 were identified on Feb. 25, 2022, and five prior to Feb. 25, 2022. Four of the new cases were identified on Tinian and three on Rota.

Of the 139 cases reported last Friday, all of them were identified on Feb. 24, 2022. Seven were identified on Tinian and five on Rota.

Thursday night's 157 new cases, 134 were identified on Feb. 23 and 23 were identified prior to Feb. 23. Six were identified on Tinian and 22 on Rota (13 on Feb. 21, eight on Feb. 22, and one on Feb. 23, 2022).

Of the total 9,595 cases identified in the CNMI since March 26, 2020, as of Feb. 25, 2022, there have been 8,638 recoveries; 927 active cases; and 30 COVID-19-related deaths. Of that number, 8,943 were identified via community testing and 652 via travel testing.

A total of 164 COVID-19 vaccine shots were administered on Feb. 26, 2022; of the eligible population, 56.6% have received an additional dose. The vaccination rate is calculated using the 2020 Census population estimates for the CNMI and includes the eligible 5-years-old and older population.

A total of 587 COVID-19 tests were conducted on Feb. 25, 2022:

- 451 via Community-Based Testing
- 106 at Koblerville COVID-19 Community Center
- 22 at Tinian Health Center
- 8 at Rota Health Center ***(Saipan Tribune)***

CDC

From Page 1

37% of U.S. counties, where about 28% of Americans live.

The new recommendations do not change the requirement to wear masks on public transportation and indoors in airports, train stations and bus stations. The CDC guidelines for other indoor spaces aren't binding, meaning cities and institutions even in areas of low risk may set their own rules. And the agency says people with COVID-19 symptoms or who test positive shouldn't stop wearing masks.

But with protection from immunity rising—both from vaccination and infection—the overall risk of severe disease is now generally lower, the CDC said.

"Anybody is certainly welcome to wear a mask at any time if they feel safer wearing a mask," CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said in a news briefing. "We want to make sure our hospitals are OK and people are not coming in with severe disease. ... Anyone can go to the CDC website, find out the volume of disease in their community and make that decision."

Some states, including Massachusetts, Connecticut and New Jersey, are at low to medium risk while others such as West Virginia, Kentucky, Florida and Arizona still have wide areas at high levels of concern.

CDC's previous transmission-prevention guidance to communities focused on two measures—the rate of new COVID-19 cases and the percentage of positive test results over the previous week.

Based on those measures, agency officials advised people to wear masks indoors in counties where spread of the virus was deemed substantial or high. As of this week, more than 3,000 of the nation's more than 3,200 counties—greater than 95%—were listed as having substantial or high transmission

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

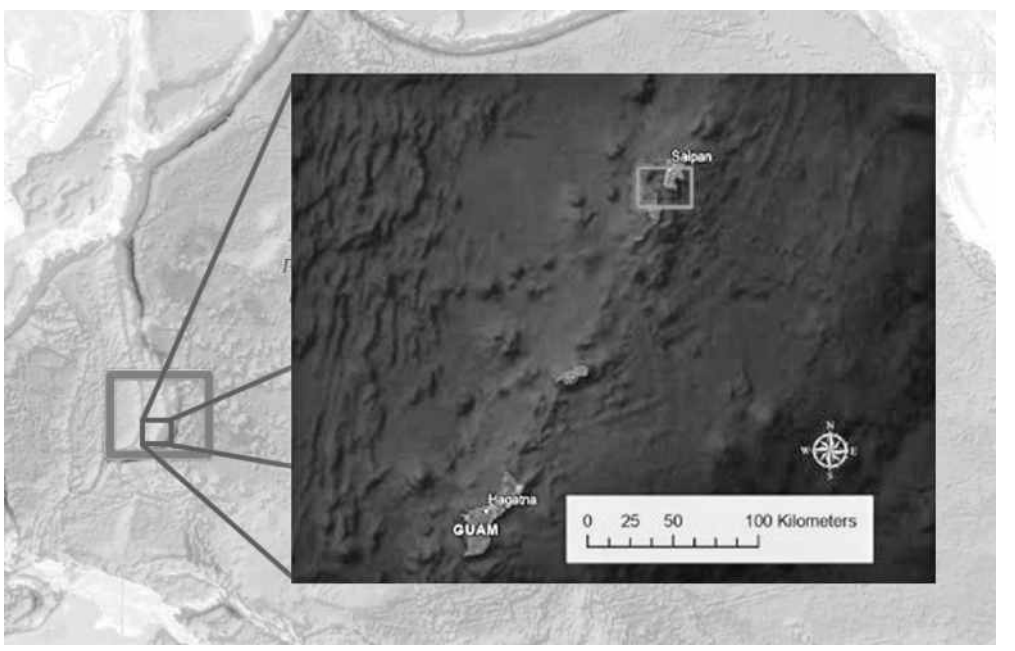
SAIPAN

From Page 1

29s remain largely unknown.

During this expedition, the team will conduct archeological surveys, map the seafloor in the region, and characterize the neighboring seabed habitat using state-of-the-art scientific methods and technologies, including shipboard systems, autonomous underwater vehicles, and a remotely operated vehicle, according to a release from NOAA Ocean Exploration

The expedition will result in an inventory of aircraft crash sites off Tinian and Saipan and data for site management and preservation; advance the efficiency, accuracy, and cost effectiveness of deepwater archaeology; and promote an increased awareness of maritime heritage through technologies that make underwater sites remotely accessible, such as 3-D models. Finally, the expedition team hopes to document and honor the final resting place of 76 U.S. service members who lost their lives in these waters. ***(PR)***



The proposed study region for the Deepwater Surveys of World War II U.S. Cultural Assets in the Saipan Channel expedition, in the waters of Tinian and Saipan in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, is inside the yellow rectangle. Inset: All survey data during the expedition will be collected inside the region of the pink rectangle in waters between 100 and 600 meters (328 - 1,968 feet) depth. Image courtesy of NOAA Ocean Exploration, Deepwater Surveys of World War II U.S. Cultural Assets in the Saipan Channel.

‘Immunity clause inapplicable in lawsuit against JGO’

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Office of the Governor and Gov. Ralph DLG Torres have asked the Superior Court to deny the House Committee on Judiciary & Governmental Operations recent motion to dismiss Torres’ suit against the committee, saying the JGO committee’s main argument does not apply to the committee as a whole to begin with.

Over a week ago, the JGO committee asked the court to dismiss Torres’ suit against the committee, ultimately arguing that the JGO is protected under the CNMI’ Constitution’s speech or debate clause, which provides them immunity from being sued.

In response to that, Torres’ lawyers, Gilbert Birnbrich and Joseph Horey, argue that because the lawsuit does not name any specific members of the committee, the immunity clause is inapplicable.

“The present lawsuit does not name any member of the Legislature, nor seek to impair the functioning of any such member. The immunity clause is, therefore, inapplicable. The committee argues that it is immune from the suit based on the immunity clause. By its plain terms, however, that clause affords limited immunity to individual legislators; it does not immunize a legislative committee from a declaratory judgment action,” the lawyers said.

Birnbrich

However, even if the CNMI Constitution’s immunity clause could be deemed applicable under some circumstances to a committee of the Legislature, the two lawyers argue that the clause still does not apply here because the complaint raises claims of executive immunity and lack of legislative purpose.

“A clause conferring legislative immunity does not override the separation of powers nor bestow legislative supremacy,” they told the court.

Torres’ lawyers also addressed the committee’s argument that the immunity clause prevents any judicial review of its actions so long as the action under review is constituted as a “legitimate legislative activity.”

Birnbrich and Horey argue that since the whole point of the governor’s complaint is that the committee was not engaged in legitimate legislative activity, but rather an unconstitutional arrogation of executive power to itself, the committee is preventing the court from determining whether the legislative activity in question was legitimate or constitutional.

Horey

“This argument ‘parks the cart before the horse and declares the race over.’ In other words, the committee assumes a favorable decision on the merits, and then uses that nonexistent favorable decision as a reason to preclude the court from ever reaching the merits in the first place. The committee in effect is saying that, since it was engaged in a legitimate legislative activity, the immunity clause prevents the court from considering or deciding whether the activity it was engaged in was really legitimate or constitutional at all,” they argue.

Lastly, in regards to the committee’s argument that the attorney general is a required party in this suit, Torres argue that the CNMI attorney general is not a required party to this lawsuit because it is not necessary to join the attorney general in order to grant complete relief among the existing parties, and the attorney general claims no interest relating to the subject of this action.

“Complete relief among the existing parties is possible without joining the attorney general. All the declarations that the governor seeks in the four causes of action in his complaint may be issued without the attorney general’s participation. In short, the court may declare the subpoena invalid and unlawful,” the lawyers said.

“The attorney general has not claimed an interest in the subject of this action and in fact has no interest in its outcome. Two months have passed since the committee referred the contempt, and the attorney general has not taken the first step to commence prosecution. The attorney general has not moved to intervene. That is undoubtedly because he has no interest in this lawsuit and is not a necessary party,” the lawyers added.

Power interruption on Wednesday, March 2

There will be a scheduled power service interruption on March 2, 2022, from 9am to 1pm, so that linemen of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. can replace a wooden power pole with a concrete pole and to re-install the air break switch along As Perdido Road. No water wells or wastewater facility will be affected.

The outage will affect As Perdido (Maguro Dr., Nufo Pl., Niyok Dr., Haiguas Ln., Teodoro Dr., Ramona Ln., Nuhot Ln., Afula Ln., Aplok Dr., Bayak Dr., Faha Pl., & Pegge Pl.).

■ Momentary Outage: 9am to 9:30am

■ Area(s) affected: As Perdido (portions of As Perdido Road, Iriko Dr., Agua Ln., and Atot Av.).

■ Momentary Outage: 12:30pm to 1pm

· Area(s) affected: As Lito (portions of Chalan Monsignor Martinez and Tottotville). ***(PR)***

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Commonwealth Utilities Corporation

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-22-018

LEASE AND DELIVERY OF MIDSIZE SUV VEHICLES FOR ADMINISTRATION

The Office of the Executive Director for the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids for the lease and delivery of midsize SUV vehicles for the CUC Administration in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $50.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked ***"CUC-IFB-22-018, Lease and Delivery of Midsize SUV Vehicles for Administration"*** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on March 10, 2022** at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before submission deadline. Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid or supply under the contract. The IFB does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the bid under this request, or to procure or contract for goods. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on February 17, 2022**, to Manny B. Sablan, CUC's Purchasing Administrator, via email manny.sablan@cucgov.org with copies to Jenine Santos, CUC Purchasing Technician at Jenine.santos@cucgov.org, and Marcela Tenorio at email marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in the said bids, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids submitted shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

ON REVIEW OF PROPOSED NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

FOMT wants 30 more days for public comment period

The Friends of the Mariana Trench wrote to the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries last Friday to formally request a 30-day extension to the public comment period for the five-year review of the proposed national marine sanctuary in the Mariana Islands.

"We think our community needs some additional time to understand the small changes we made to the nomination," said Joleen Salas, senior staff of the Friends of the Mariana Trench. "First and foremost, we do not seek any changes to how our fisheries are currently managed. Second, we want to focus our proposed sanctuary on our cultural heritage, and not the Mariana Trench. And third, co-management with our local government and inclusion of our Indigenous peoples in management is mandatory.

"We were very intentional not to make any recommendation on where the sanctuary should be located because we feel that it should emerge from the community, not just from us," said Salas. "The Friends is confused about the statements surrounding the 57% closure. We have no idea where this came from and we want to get to the bottom of this. We back the community in wanting to clarify this."

The Friends found the first public comment period to be helpful as several important issues were raised by community members.

"The elders in our community that I've spoken to are passionate about research and education to benefit younger generations. Fishermen have also expressed they want to be able to pass our proud fishing tradition down to future generations without the complications of a permit process and we agree with them," Salas said.

The Friends submitted an 18-page comment letter highlighting how the water surrounding the Marianas meet or exceed the criteria to be recognized as a national marine sanctuary (https://www.regulations.gov/comment/NOAA-NOS-2022-0005-0014). All comments are available for review on the *Federal Register*. The Friends encourage the community to share comments or concerns.

The ocean is our oldest ancestor and the ultimate provider. It is a source of sustenance, a place of celebration, and a pillar of our traditions. Through the ocean we are connected across our islands and across time—to those who came before us and those yet to come. As an island people, it is a blessing to be able to rely on the ocean in more ways than one.

"We support and encourage community participation. We are available to assist with the commenting process and guide you to helpful resources," said Salas. "We are the descendant caretakers of our surrounding ocean. The ocean is our inheritance. It is our responsibility to participate in its management."

Please visit the Friends website at FriendsMarianaTrench.org, or message them via WhatsApp at (670) 483-3668 or email at info@FriendsMarianaTrench.org. ***(PR)***

Public comment sought for CNMI watershed assessment

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Honolulu District and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Island Governor's Office are conducting a watershed assessment authorized by Section 729 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1986, as amended. This was initiated as a result of the 2018 Super Typhoon Yutu, which caused widespread damage throughout the CNMI. The purpose of this effort is to provide a conceptual strategy that will help rehabilitate and improve the resiliency of damaged infrastructure and natural resources while reducing risks to human life and property from future natural hazards throughout the CNMI.

The WA incorporates available information related to recent storm damage from Yutu, as well as other past storms that have had a major impact on the CNMI. It also assesses social, economic, life loss, and environmental risks. In collaboration with study partners and stakeholders, the recommendations focus on addressing issues within six different problem categories: tropical storms and typhoons, coastal areas, water quality and quantity, inland ecosystems, rainfall events, and tsunamis. A risk- and uncertainty-based approach was utilized to help prioritize recommendations and develop an implementation strategy, which focuses on immediate versus incremental implementation steps.

The draft report and its appendices will be released March 1, 2022 for a 45-day public review and comment period. They can be accessed either on the DCRM website (https://dcrm.gov.mp/our-programs/water-quality-and-watershed-management/watershed-working-group/) or the USACE website (https://www.poh.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Civil-Works-Projects/). All comments should be emailed to CNMIWA@usace.army.mil no later than April 15, 2022 for further review and consideration. ***(PR)***

CNMI DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

PUBLIC NOTICE

The CNMI Department of Commerce, Central Statistics Division is preparing to conduct the CNMI 2022 Prevailing Wage Study (PWS) survey to begin on March 01, 2022 and notifies all businesses and employers in the CNMI to log on to the CSD Data Collection Portal and complete the PWS survey questionnaire.

All businesses and employers, with and with no employees, are urged to complete this survey before March 15, 2022.

Data Collection Portal Link:
http://cnmidata.commerce.gov.mp/

ANNOUNCEMENT

Effective January 1, 2022 our firm name has been changed from
BAUMANN, KONDAS AND XU, LLC
to
BAUMANN, XU AND BLACK, LLC

238 Archbishop Flores St., Suite 903
Hagatna, Guam 96910
Tel: (671) 477-9084 I Fax: (671) 477-9087
Email: Reception@baumannguam.com

Attorney Nelson Xu will be in Saipan on March 2 (Wednesday) and March 3 (Thursday) to answer your immigration questions. Call or email for an appointment.

FSM cuts diplomatic ties with Russia for 'brutal' invasion of Ukraine

PALIKIR, Pohnpei—The Federated States of Micronesia has severed diplomatic relations with the Russia following its "violent and unjustifiable invasion" of Ukraine.

FSM conveyed to the Russian Federation its decision to cut diplomatic relations between the two countries last Feb. 25, 2022, saying that FSM will only entertain renewing diplomatic relations "when the [Russian Federation] demonstrates actionable commitments to peace, friendship, cooperation, and love in our common humanity."

"The people and government of the FSM stand in solidarity with the people and government of Ukraine, a country that, like ours, embraces democracy and democratic principles, and the rule of law. The FSM, with great sympathy to the people and government of Ukraine, recognizes that Ukraine has been violently and unjustifiably invaded by the Russian Federation," said FSM president David W. Panuelo in a statement. "To the people and government of Ukraine: while it may be little comfort, the people and government of the FSM supports your sovereignty, and supports your right to exist, including your right to exist in peace and harmony with your neighbors."

"To the people of the Russian Federation: the FSM continues to extend to you peace, friendship, cooperation, and love in our common humanity, which we extend to all peoples and nations on this shared planet of ours. The people and government of the FSM have no animosity toward the People of the Russian Federation," Panuelo added. "The same can only be said of the government of the Russian Federation, however, once they recognize that choosing war instead of peace, violence instead of friendship, betrayal instead of cooperation, and hatred instead of love, is both unsustainable and unjustified. The FSM condemns the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine and the unjustified and brutal assault on its people and territory, which our country recognizes as unambiguously villainous and holds in the highest form of contempt.

Panuelo

The FSM condemns the government of Russia for their invasion into the sovereign territory of Ukraine, and the hardship placed upon Ukraine's people. The FSM condemns any actions which threaten global peace and stability and the rules-based international order.

"It is often described that the preference of any Pacific Island country, to include the FSM, is that we be friends to all, and enemies to none," Panuelo said. "This indeed and truly remains the cornerstone of our nation's foreign policy. But values and convictions must matter more than not at all, and as this Paradise in Our Backyards is founded on our Micronesian ideals of peace, unity, and liberty, so too do we advocate for these ideals to be shared and spread." ***(PR/Saipan Tribune)***

Deadline today for youth art, essay, spoken word competition

The deadline to submit artwork, essays, and poems for the Northern Marianas Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence's 2022 Know Your Worth competition is 5pm today, Feb. 28, 2022.

The aim of this competition is to create awareness among youth during Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month in February. All CNMI students in grades 6 to 12 are invited to create original artwork, essays, and spoken word poetry performances that address themes related to teen dating violence and/or healthy relationships in young people.

Each competition category will award cash prizes up to $300 to the first, second, and third place winners of the Middle School division (grades 6-8) and the High School division (grades 9-12).

Artwork that will be accepted include drawings, collages, prints, mixed media, computer-generated art, and photographs. Artworks may be submitted to the NMCADSV office at the MH-I Building in Puerto Rico before the deadline. Students may also check with their school's main office to find out if they are accepting submissions for this competition.

The essay competition requires each student to address one of two writing prompts (outlined in the Competition Info Sheet) related to teen dating violence in 300-500 words. Essays must be typed and emailed to info@endviolencenmi.org.

Those interested in taking part in the spoken word competition must submit their poems for review to info@endviolencenmi.org by 5pm today, Feb. 28, 2022. To be eligible for awards and prizes, students must schedule with NMCADSV to have their spoken word poetry performances filmed before the online showcase on Saturday, March 5, 2022.

All submissions must include a signed NMCADSV student release form. This form along with the flyer and competition info sheet may be viewed and downloaded at bit.ly/kyw2022.

Recordings of the spoken word poetry performances will be showcased online via Zoom and on NMCADSV's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/EndViolenceNMI) at 4pm on Saturday, March 5, 2022. Those watching the livestream may also vote to select the People's Choice winners for the middle school and high school divisions. Top winners for all three categories will also be announced at this event.

For additional information, visit bit.ly/kyw2022, or contact NMCADSV at 234-3878 or email info@endviolencenmi.org. ***(PR)***

Water service interruption today

There will be an emergency scheduled water service interruption in As Matuis, San Roque, Achugao and Tanapag today, Feb. 28, 2022, from 8:30am to 3:30pm.

This is due to maintenance and to set the Pressure Reducing Valve that regulate the pressure within the affected areas. Water service to the affected areas will resume soon after.

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. appreciates the public's understanding during this water service interruption and will continue to work diligently for better utility services to the CNMI.

For more information, contact the CUC Hotline (236-4333) or monitor its Facebook page for the latest updates (https://www.facebook.coml-CommonwealthUtilitiesCorporationl). ***(PR)***

E-Land donates to Tonga relief drive

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

E-Land Corp. donates one pallet of bottled water (100 cases), four cases of hand sanitizers (112 bottles), and 100 packs of 10-lb rice to the Tonga community on Saipan for their drive to ship a container of relief goods to Tonga.

E-Land Corp. recently donated several items to the Tonga community on Saipan for their drive to ship a container of relief goods to Tonga, which was recently devastated by the eruption of the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai underwater volcano.

According to Corporate Social Responsibility manager Lindsay Ahn, E-Land donated one pallet of bottled water (100 cases), four cases of hand sanitizers (112 bottles), and 100 packs of 10-lb rice.

All of the items were delivered to Life in the Son Christian Fellowship church last Friday, Feb. 25, Ahn said in an email. Fololina Pua, a Clubmate at Pacific Islands Club Saipan's Sports, Entertainment and Activity department, whose father is from Tonga, joined the occasion.

She said the management of E-Land wishes for the safety and health of people of Tonga, and their fast recovery.

E-Land operates three hotels on Saipan: PIC Saipan, Kensgton Hotel Saipan, and Coral Ocean Point golf resort in Koblerville.

According to wire reports, 293 houses, the majority in Tongatapu, have been damaged or affected by the volcanic eruption and tsunami in Tonga last Jan. 15. ***(Saipan Tribune)***

VEHICLE FOR AUCTION

2016 MAZDA 6, 4 DOOR SEDAN - DARK BLUE COLOR

For more information, please contact the Bank of Guam through its counsel, Robert T. Torres at Telephone Numbers (670) 234-7859 - (670) 234-5750.

Bids will be closed on

FRIDAY, MARCH 4, 2022 AT 4:00 P.M

The Bank reserves the right to reject any or all offers

The vehicle will be sold to the highest bidder "as is, where is" without any warranties – Minimum bid is $16,690.00
All bids must be received by 4:00p.m

Inspection and a vehicle bid form can be obtained from Bank of Guam counsel's office at:

ROBERT TENORIO TORRES
Attorney at Law
Chalan Kiya
P.O. Box 503758 CK
Saipan, MP 96950

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION

PUBLIC NOTICE

This Notice is paid by NMHC with HUD funds
02/23/2022

Final Notice and Public Review of a Proposed Activity in a 100-Year Floodplain

This is to give notice that **Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC)** has determined that the following proposed **Beach Road Improvement Phase III & IV project** under the **Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program grant number B-19-DV-69-0001 and B-19-DV-69-002** is located in the **100-year floodplain.** NMHC has identified and evaluated practicable alternatives to the proposed action in the floodplain and the potential impacts on the **floodplain** from the proposed action, as required by **Executive Order 11988**, in accordance with HUD regulations at 24 CFR 55.20 Subpart C Procedures for Making Determinations on Floodplain Management and Protection of Wetlands. The proposed project(s) is located on **Route 33, Beach Road, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.**

The public may view the full description of the project and provide comments by visiting the NMHC website at www.nmhcgov.net by clicking on the public notice/announcement tab and selecting the Environmental Review Records or you may visit the NMHC CDBG-DR website at https://www.cnmicdbgdr.com.

Written comments must be received by NMHC on or before March 14, 2022. A minimum 15 calendar day comment period will begin the day after the publication and end on the 16th day after the publication. Written comments may also be submitted through the following methods: email at nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp; or facsimile to 1-670-234-9021; or hand deliver to the NMHC Central Office located in Garapan, Saipan. Attention CDBG-DR Project Division.

/s/
Ralph DLG. Torres
Governor, CNMI

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

The US couldn't stop Russia from attacking Ukraine—but it can make it pay

The most conspicuous victims of Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine are the people who will lose their lives in defending their country against a brutal (and nuclear-armed) neighbor. But Vladimir Putin's decision to launch a many-pronged attack—an audacious operation the United States predicted but was unable to prevent—is also a devastating assault on international norms and potentially a harbinger of a wider war in Europe.

This week's attack fully justifies the significant sanctions the U.S. and its allies are moving to impose on Russia. Sadly, it's not clear whether these measures will cause Russia to relent in its aggression against Ukraine. They may, however, put Putin on notice that Russia's economy, and its "corrupt billionaires," will pay a heavy price for this act of aggression—and an even steeper cost if Russia were to menace a member state of NATO.

On Tuesday, President Joe Biden indicated that sanctions would be ratcheted up to match Russian escalation in Ukraine. On Thursday, he made good on that commitment, unveiling new sanctions that would impose real hardships on Russia and members of its ruling elite—but not on Putin directly, though Biden said that is still an option. Russian banks and companies would be cut off from access to the U.S. financial system and restrictions will be imposed on the export of U.S.-made technologies to Russia.

Regrettably, the measures did not include a move to exclude Russia from participation in the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication, or SWIFT: a consortium whose secure network enables financial institutions to complete transactions by their customers.

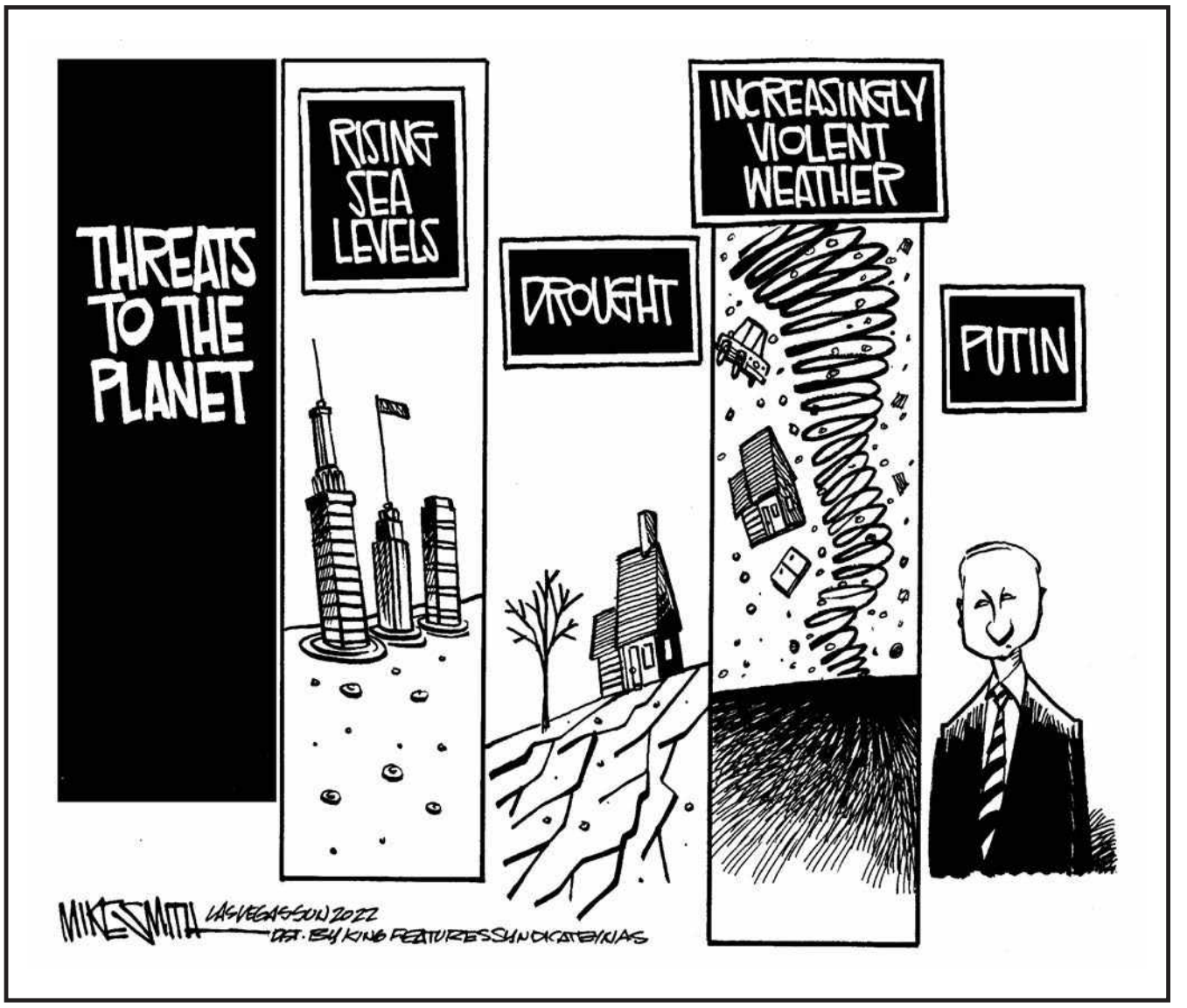
Biden said in a speech Thursday that targeting Russian participation in SWIFT "is always an option, but right now that's not the position that the rest of Europe wishes to take." The president suggested that the other sanctions he unveiled were "of equal consequence—maybe more consequence than SWIFT."

The sanctions were designed to "maximize the long-term impact on Russia," Biden said, noting that the measures would "strike a blow to their ability to continue to modernize their military" and "be a major hit to Putin's long-term strategic ambitions."

We can hope, as Biden surely does, that by punishing Russia economically the U.S. and its allies can pressure Putin into cutting short his war in Ukraine. But Putin knew an invasion would likely result in such sanctions, and he attacked anyway. (Indeed, in a rambling, bitter speech on Monday the Russian president described the sanctions as "blackmail" and said their only purpose was to "restrain the development of Russia.")

But Biden was thinking not only about Ukraine when he

See US on Next Page



Vladimir Putin is playing with fire in Ukraine

By CLARA FERREIRA MARQUES
Bloomberg Opinion

Clara Ferreira Marques is a Bloomberg Opinion *columnist covering commodities and environmental, social and governance issues. Previously, she was an associate editor for* Reuters Breakingviews*, and editor and correspondent for Reuters in Singapore, India, the U.K., Italy and Russia.*

The worst, it seems, has now happened in Ukraine. In a pre-dawn televised address, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced he had ordered an operation aimed at demilitarizing Ukraine. He blamed the U.S. for crossing "red lines." Kyiv, he said, would be responsible for any bloodshed. Reports of explosions and gunfire in cities across the country began immediately.

It's a dark moment for Russia, for Ukraine, for Europe—the darkest in Putin's two decades at the helm. It is also a point of no return for Russia's leader, and one with lasting consequences for the world.

Putin has fallen into the autocrats' trap. Isolated, he is no longer able to weigh up reality as it is, but sees his fears instead. He is obsessed with what he perceives as the threat from Ukraine's westward drift, and with turning back the clock to reset the post-Cold World order. His speech Thursday—ranging from Russia's weakness at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, to Iraq, Yugoslavia and a chilling warning against Western intervention—was hardly the product of a cool, rational mind. It could not have contrasted more sharply with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's earlier moving appeals for peace, made directly to ordinary Russians. U.S. President Joe Biden called Russia's actions a "premeditated war."

Hubris, paranoia, military adventurism—a heady combination, and one that has been fatal for dictators and their regimes. And Putin is starting a war Russians do not want, for which they will pay the cost.

Political scientist Daniel Treisman, in his study of autocrats' last acts, found that most regimes come to an end through mistakes, whether because they ignored change or, like Argentina's Leopoldo Galtieri, embarked on an ill-advised war. He invaded the Falklands in 1982, assuming Britain would not fight and that his population would unite behind him. He was misguided, and the blunder was terminal.

Russia is not Argentina, and there will be no such immediate repercussion for Putin, whatever happens. Increased repression at home is in fact the most likely consequence from this show of force abroad—either because the Kremlin can, or because it must.

But consequences can play out over time, and the Russian president appears to be unraveling. Even by the standards of a repressive authoritarian regime with a history of false-flag operations and fabricated pretexts for war—and for an autocrat with a penchant for macho, reckless military pursuits and for rewriting the past—the last few days have been hard to comprehend. A rambling, hourlong speech on Monday laced with wild accusations, portraying Ukraine as Vladimir Lenin's invention. Then a staged Security Council meeting with senior officials being made to publicly support Putin and the recognition of the separatist republics. Now, a war that, stretching credulity to the limit, Putin says will "denazify" Ukraine—a country that suffered brutally in the Second World War.

He made his move, moreover, while the United Nations Security Council was meeting, in a last-ditch attempt to avoid conflict.

What is remarkable here is not just the ambition of what Putin is apparently undertaking, a full-scale military operation with little regard for repercussions, an effort to destroy a neighbor and destabilize the region. It's also the scale of the delusion, when it comes to the threat posed by NATO and—crucially—his country's long-term ability to bear the human and financial cost of isolation. Yes, Moscow has built up central bank reserves and a war chest, but this is a country whose economy is stagnating, and one that's already struggling to deal with a health crisis as COVID-19 races through an under-vaccinated population.

To drive home the point, the West must now dramatically ramp up sanctions, reaching far beyond individuals into Russia's state banks and more—even if few options now come without a cost for Europe and the rest of the world. Vladimir Putin has already begun the war no one but Kremlin hawks wanted. Now only the toughest measures can hold him back.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

March is Developmental Disability Awareness Month

By CLEO NENING
SPECIAL TO THE SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Every March, the nation puts a spotlight on the disability community by celebrating Developmental Disability Awareness Month. This year's national theme is "Worlds Imagined." The advocates of the Northern Marianas Protection and Advocacy Systems, Inc. will be putting together a social media campaign for the month of March in honor of DDAM.

A developmental disability is defined as a mental or physical disorder that begins from the ages of 0 to 22. The person must have at least three functional limitations such as learning, mobility, self-care self-direction, capacity for living independently, and economic self-sufficiency. Types of developmental disabilities are cerebral palsy, autism, intellectual disability, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and learning disabilities.

This campaign aims to spotlight how people with developmental disabilities live normal lives. In return, the public can learn how they can help people with developmental disabilities achieve their dreams. This campaign seeks to raise awareness on inclusion with people with disabilities, provide tips on Individualized Education Plan 101, and self-advocacy skills. There will also be awareness on barriers people with development disabilities face on a daily basis and how we, as a community, can help.

NMPASI is the CNMI designated organization that protects the civil, legal, and human rights of people with disabilities. For more information on our programs and services, please contact NMPASI at our office numbers (670) 235-7273/4, text message (670) 287-0652, or visit our website at www.nmpasi.org.

Cleo Nening is a program coordinator at the Northern Marianas Protection and Advocacy Systems Inc.

Amata's message to the American Samoa community

Editor's Note: The following is the author's message regarding the community presence of COVID-19 in American Samoa, in both Samoan and English. A video clip of each is also available: https://youtu.be/64-3bp998SE (in Samoan)and https://youtu.be/nh0X53wgAh4 (in English).

By UIFA'ATALI AMATA
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Uifa'atali Amata is the delegate of American Samoa in the 117th U.S. Congress.

American Samoa has been deeply blessed to have had so many months without COVID-19 on our shores, particularly during seasons when some of the earlier variants circulated worldwide. Now, we've had a few days to face the fact that our circumstances have changed. The world has had two years' experience with this virus, and we benefit from that knowledge. Most importantly, we have the vaccine that is known to limit chances of the worst outcomes. The vaccinated are less likely to face severe symptoms, hospitalization, or death.

We are a strong people. Our family connections are strong, and our faith is strong. We can walk this path together, under the watchful eyes of God. These first few weeks are important to slow down how quickly the virus moves through our people so that our medical facilities and personnel don't have to face too many cases all at once. Everyone has a part in that by simply being responsible. Let's listen to our doctors. They say to isolate when you know you've been exposed directly to someone who tested positive, stay home when you have mild symptoms, and be conscientious about washing your hands. Finally, thank you to Gov. Lemanu Mauga, Lt. Gov. Talauega Ale, and everyone working to reduce the impact of the virus and keep our island healthy.

May God bless our people, and more than ever, soifua.

■■■

E maeu le manuia o Amerika Samoa i le tele o masina ua tuanai atu o aunoa ma le ma'i pesi o le Covid, ae maise le vaitau sa tele ai ituaiga eseese o le ma'i na salalau i le lalolagi atoa. O le nei ua feagai i tatou ma suiga i nai aso ua mavae atu. E lua tausaga o feagai le lalolagi ma le nei vairusi, ma ua aoga lea mo i tatou. Ua sili ona taua le i ai o le tui puipuia e faaitiitia ai le ono o'o atu i tulaga pagatia. O i latou ua fai tui puipuia e tau le maua i āuga ogaoga, taofia i maota gasegase pe maliu foi.

O i tatou faatasi ua sili ona mamasagia i le mea faatauvaa. Ua tatou taofi mau i o tatou sootaga faaleaiga ma ua maua'a lo tatou faatuatua. E mafai e i tatou uma faatasi ona fesavaliai i lea ala i lalo o le silafaga a le Atua. E taua nai uluai vaiaso nei e faaitiitia ai le pesi atu o le ma'i i nai o tatou tagata ina ia lavataoso a tatou maota talavai ma le au faigaluega e tali atu pe a tele ni ma'i o le a alia'i mai. E tofu i tatou taitoatasi ma le matafaioi e ala i le soifua māgafagafa. Ia tatou utagia le fautua mai a o tatou foma'i. Ua fautuaina le faanofoesea pe a fai na feagai tonu oe ma se tasi na faamaonia i suega ua maua i le ma'i, alaala i lou maota pe a i ai ni āuga ia oe, ma ia mataalia i le faamamaina o ou aao. E mulia'i se tautalaga i le momoli atu o le faafetai i le afioga i le Kovana sili ia Lemanu Mauga, le afioga i le Kovana Lutena ia Talauega Ale, ma lo outou mamalu uma lava o loo fitaituga i le faiva o le faaitiitia o aafiaga o le ma'i pesi ma faatumau le maloloina i nai o tatou motu.

Ia faamanuiaina pea e le Atua nai o tatou tagata e le aunoa, Soifua.

Statement on CDC guidance and keeping schools safely open

By MIGUEL CARDONA
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Miguel Cardona is the U.S. Secretary of Education.

Editor's Note: U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona issued the following statement on the release of new CDC guidance:

Ninety-nine percent of schools are safely open for in-person learning and that is a testament to the hard work and partnership of school communities—particularly parents, educators, district leaders and school staff. With today's announcement of updated CDC guidance, we can continue to keep schools safely open while allowing for educators and parents to get back to focusing on what is most important: our students' futures. Moving forward, districts should continue to work with local health experts, parents, and educators to identify what works best for their communities and consider the appropriate mitigation strategies needed to keep students and staff safe. This work—in addition to the critical work of helping students catch up academically and providing emotional and mental health supports—can and should be done using American Rescue Plan funds. As we move forward into a new phase of recovery, the department remains committed to our school communities and providing the guidance and resources they need to be successful."

Information on the new CDC guidance can be found at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/community-levels.html?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=

US

From Page 8

said Thursday that new sanctions would rein in "Putin's long-term strategic ambitions." The president stressed that "we're also taking steps to defend our NATO allies, particularly in the east."

It would be ironic if Russian aggression against Ukraine, supposedly motivated by a fear that Kyiv might someday join NATO, resulted in greater solidarity among the countries that already are part of the alliance.

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We can win this Cold War, too

By JAY AMBROSE
Tribune News Service

Jay Ambrose is an op-ed columnist for Tribune News Service. Readers may email him at speaktojay@aol.com.

Some years ago, when I was editor of a now-defunct newspaper in El Paso, Texas, my wife and I bought a house with a deteriorated, spider-filled, filthy, underground fallout shelter in the backyard. It made me shudder, not because of its appearance, but because it represented past fears of the Soviet Union perpetrating radioactive death with nuclear bomb explosions. The Soviet Union's description? Dictatorial, imperialistic, communistic, death-dealing and evil.

The context was the Cold War that did have hot-and-bloody outbursts. It was between the Russian-led Soviet Union with its allies and the United States with its allies and lasted from roughly the end of World War II to 1991. At stake were liberty, a decent world and maybe even humanity itself. While the fallout shelter would likely have saved no one, its mere existence symbolized the alarm embedded in what was happening.

But despite political conflicts and errors of varied kinds, our democratic nation and others hung in there. The Soviet Union, at one point running out of money if not cruelty, adopted a well-intentioned leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, who instigated reforms and negotiated a nuclear-control deal with President Ronald Reagan. East Germany's Berlin Wall came down. The Soviet Union started crumbling. At last, it was done, and now, as the Cold War has just mercilessly returned owing in part to our own laxities, we must hang in there again. We must deal seriously with the murderous, clever Russian President Vladimir Putin, now in the act of viciously squashing innocent, courageous Ukraine.

Another Gorbachev he is not. He is more nearly Joseph Stalin, the Soviet dictator who helped win World War II and agreed at a conference with President Franklin Roosevelt and British Premier Winston Churchill that we would then have independent, liberated countries throughout Europe. Stalin instead practiced domination, oppression and starvation through communism of those Eastern European countries that Russia was supposed to keep an eye on.

He built what Churchill called an iron curtain. To be sure, Stalin once studied to be a priest but didn't make the grade and learned different tenets from Vladimir Lenin. Some hold him personally accountable for 20 million deaths.

Putin is not there yet and has had to play a far more careful game even though his unhidden ambition is to rebuild the Soviet Union, starting with Ukraine and getting the Baltic nations and others to line up with Russia, whatever it takes. He has enjoyed putting his nuclear weaponry on display while building closer relationships with China and Iran. President Joe Biden has moved on some solid sanctions while holding back on a particularly significant financial hit and blockages of some Russian energy sources that Europe needs.

There is no suggestion from any responsible party of U.S. military confrontation with Russia unless Putin tries military moves against NATO countries we have vowed to protect. So far, Europe seems to be pretty much, it not wholly, in agreement with what Biden is inclined to do. While no one is calling for out-and-out war with Russia, some American observers are calling for a far tougher approach while there are also some saying what the heck, stay out of this thing. Those in this last group don't seem to get it that staying out of this thing now would mean dealing with far worse things in the future.

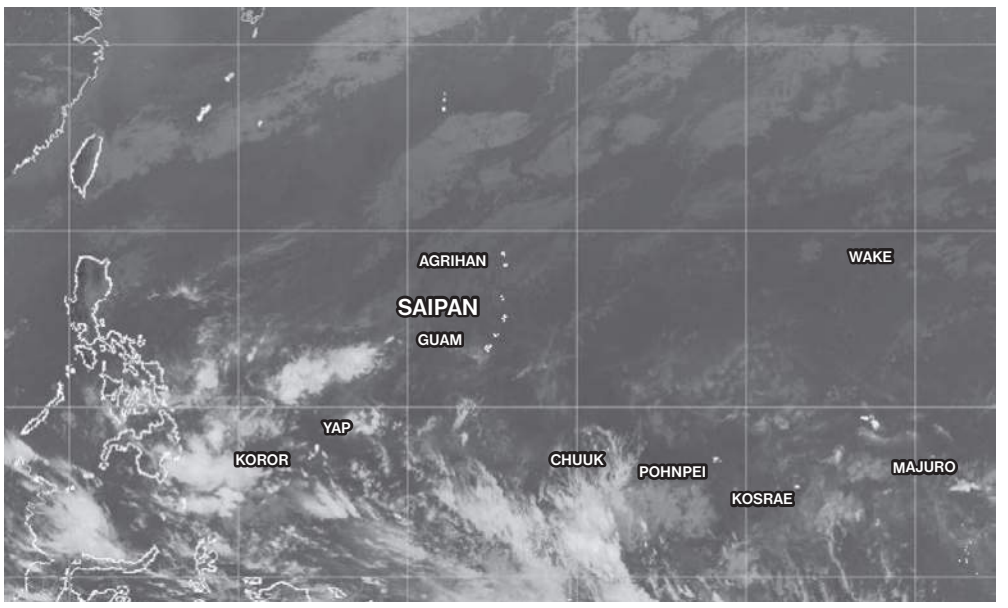
We made mistakes in the first Cold War and we will make mistakes in this one, but we and our allies can see this through if we put high principles and care for others above misled ideologies. I will end by saying I had a reporter friend in Germany when the Berlin Wall was coming down and he gave me a hunk I put on a shelf. I just looked at it and was encouraged.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Breezy. Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Breezy. Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.	Mostly cloudy with a chance of showers and a slight chance of thunderstorms.
86º 76º	86º 75	85º 76º	86º 75º	85º 76º

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 7:12 AM, SUNDAY, FEBRUARY. 27, 2022

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Doppler radar shows some isolated showers in the coastal waters. Ipan and Ritidian buoys are reporting seas in the 8 to 9 foot range with a primary east swell. Altimetry from overnight has seas between 9 and 11 feet to the well west and east of the Marianas waters.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy/Wind	29 / 25 °F
Palau	Scattered Thunderstorms	29 / 25 °F
Yap	Partly Cloudy	30 / 26 °F
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	30 / 26 °F
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	29 / 26 °F
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	30 / 26 °F
Majuro	Thunderstorms	29 / 27 °F

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	06:35 AM	18:24 PM
Tuesday	06:34 AM	18:24 PM
Wednesday	06:33 AM	18:24 PM
Thursday	06:33 AM	18:25 PM
Friday	06:32 AM	18:25 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	04:28	15:59 PM	-
Tuesday	05:22	17:02 PM	-
Wednesday	06:11	18:01 PM	-
Thursday	06:55	18:57 PM	-
Friday	07:35	19:50 PM	-

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	23 / 17 °F
Beijing	Mostly Cloudy	14 / 0 °F
Hong Kong	AM Clouds/PM Sun	20 / 18 °F
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	28 / 20 °F
London	Cloudy	13 / 7 °F
Los Angeles	Sunny	28 / 11 °F
Manila	Partly Cloudy	33 / 25 °F
Melbourne	Showers	25 / 19 °F
Miami	Partly Cloudy	27 / 19 °F
New York	Sunny	2 / 5-3°F
Osaka	Mostly Sunny	13 / 4 °F
Paris	Mostly Sunny	13 / 3 °F
Busan	Cloudy	13 / 9 °F
Rome	Sunny	14 / 1 °F
Salem	Partly Cloudy	17 / 4 °F
San Francisco	Mostly Sunny	17 / 9 °F
Seoul	Cloudy	11 / 3 °F
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	15 / 5°F
Washington, DC	Sunny	8 / -1 °F

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
11:41 PM	Low Tide	-0.47
07:08 AM	High Tide	1.76
12:22 PM	Low Tide	1.13
5:11 PM	High Tide	1.78

STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continue to encourage residents within the Marianas to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.

■ Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.

■ Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.

■ Choose drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options, or outdoor seating, if available, when dining in.

■ Send only one healthy adult from the household run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.

■ Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.

■ Create a household plan of action, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html

■ Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene

■ Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.

■ Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic

■ Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:

• Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.

• Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

• Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

• Limiting visitors

CHCC appreciates the patience and understanding of the community at this time. To obtain general information about the CNMI COVID-19 response, contact the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force Hotline at 287-0046, 287-0489, 287-1089. These numbers are available Monday to Sunday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For medical information about COVID-19, reach out to the COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1672/1352. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For mental health support and helpful tips during a crisis, call the Mental Health Support Line at 285-1856, 323-6560, 323-6561 These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30 pm. For the 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline, call SAMSHA at 1-800-985-5990.

For more information about DIY face coverings, visit https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html

For more information about CHCC programs, follow CHCC on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

For more information on the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, visit www.governor.gov.mpand, follow @GovernorCNMI on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This health advisory may be found online at http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html and at www.governor.gov.mp/covid-19.

Rumor control

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

Source: Office of the Governor

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 14, 2022

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	7:20am	8:05am	2, 4, 6
UA117	9:50am	10:35am	1, 3, 5, 7

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	6:30am	8:20am	1, 3, 5
UA183	8:00pm	9:50pm	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	7:20am	9:50pm	2, 4, 6 via Guam
UA117/183	9:50am	9:50pm	1, 3, 5, 7 via Guam

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

7C3406	3:10PM	6:55PM	Every 4 days (Jan 29-Mar 30)
TW9308	3:30PM	7:20PM	4, 7
OZ6243	4:00PM	7:40PM	3, 6

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

BX621	3:10PM	6:30PM	7

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA116	5:30am	6:16am	2, 4, 6
UA116	8:00am	8:46am	7
UA174	8:00am	8:46am	1, 3, 5

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

PR110	10:15pm	4:00am+1	2, 4, 7
UA184	10:40pm	4:30am+1	2, 5
UA184	10:55pm	4:45am+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA184/116	10:40pm	6:16am+1	5 via Guam
UA184/174	10:40pm	8:46am+1	2 via Guam
UA184/116	10:55pm	6:16am+1	1, 3 via Guam
UA184/174	10:55pm	8:46am+1	4, 7 via Guam
UA184/116	10:55pm	8:46am+1	6 via Guam

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3405	8:30AM	2:10PM	Every 4 days (Jan 29-Mar 30)
TW9307	9:00AM	Q2:30PM	4, 7
OZ6233	9:00AM	2:30PM	3, 6

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

BX622	8:00AM	1:10PM	7

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF MAY 18, 2021

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30AM	9:00AM	Daily
1302	11:00AM	11:30AM	Daily
1303	1:30PM	2:00PM	Tues/Wed/ Thurs/Fri
1304	3:30PM	4:00PM	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30AM	10:00AM	Daily
3102	12:00AM	12:30AM	Daily
3103	1:30PM	3:00PM	Tues/Wed/ Thurs/Fri
3104	4:30PM	5:00PM	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Temporarily Unavailable

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00	7:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1205	11:00	11:15	Daily
1206	12:00	12:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1207	13:00	13:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily
1212	17:00	17:15	Temporarily Unavailable

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
2101	7:30	7:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2105	11:30	11:45	Daily
2106	12:30	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2107	13:30	13:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily
2112	18:30	18:45	Temporarily Unavailable

Fiber line break causes Docomo outage

By BEA CABRERA
beacabrerasaipan@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

Docomo subscribers in the CNMI experienced a temporary connection disruption last Friday due to what Docomo Pacific CNMI said was caused by an "inadvertent fiber line break."

The disruption has since been fixed, with Docomo Pacific CNMI's Facebook page reporting that internet, mobile and cable TV services were restored at 10:11pm Friday night and home phone services were reconnected at 1:30am early Saturday morning.

Based on the comments posted on Docomo Pacific CNMI's Facebook page, the network issue lasted until Saturday morning in some areas. The issue caused unreliable mobile, office and home phone access, and zero internet access, including cable TV services.

Docomo Pacific CNMI posted on its Facebook page on Friday night that the Docomo tech team worked overnight since Friday to get subscribers reconnected.

According to a Docomo Pacific Inc. subscriber Janine Ramos, the disruption occurred at around 3pm Friday. "It happened at a time when we are busy at work, trying to accomplish sheets before the work week ends and was heavily dependent on the internet in the office. Our lines were down, I wasn't receiving calls or texts and couldn't send them as well. It just paralyzed work from there," she said.

Maria Valenzuela was worried that she was holding up the line at the grocery because she was paying with her credit card. "The cashier was having a hard time with credit card transactions because she said the internet was slow. But I had no cash and was left with no choice. It took a couple minutes before my card went through," she said.

A comment posted by a Kelly Marie Dignadice on Docomo Pacific Inc.'s Facebook page said, "Thank you for the update. I can't do my homework and I have a test due tonight." The company apologized and assured Dignadice that they are working on network restoration.

The outage also happened at a time of the rising conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Reports of cyberattacks by Russia inflicted upon U.S. companies and offices were so rampant that Damian Santos of Chalan Kanoa thought that the CNMI technology and networks were being attacked. "Thinking that it may be a cyberattack, I withdrew some money from the ATM because bank accounts are first to shut down when a cyberattack occurs. I'm glad it wasn't that," he said

Another service provider in the CNMI, IT&E also experienced service interruption but it was limited only to their call center and prepaid services. In a message posted on their Facebook page last Friday, it said, "Callers are unable to connect to IT&E call center representatives and all prepaid services have been affected." A few hours later, they posted that those issues have been resolved.

IT&E subscriber Jasmin Cabrera said she did not have any issues with her mobile, internet and cable TV access "I work from home and nothing went wrong with my connection. I remember trying to connect with friends who are Docomo subscribers and my calls were dropped and texts unsent. I found out later that their network was having problems."

Docomo network connection is mow back to normal. Saipan Tribune reached out to Docomo Pacific Inc. for further updates but didn't get a response as of press time.

Special assistant for Public Transportation Alfreda Camacho Maratita and master trainer Ginger Porter M.Ed. pose with the 30 participants for the PASS training. COTA

Rota, Tinian, PSS take part in COTA certification training

The Commonwealth Office of Transit Authority team participated in a three-day professional development and certification on passenger assistance and sensitivity training.

A total of 30 participants made up the three-day training, which also included two employees from the CNMI Public School System: Office of Pupil Transportation, two transit employees on the island of Rota, and two transit employees on the island of Tinian.

This yearly certification is conducted by Certified Community Transportation of America Passenger Service and Safety master trainer Ginger Porter, M.Ed. "It was a special privilege to provide the recent Passenger Assistance Safety and Sensitivity training to all of COTA, including those providing new service to Tinian and Rota. Customers of CNMI's transit system will appreciate attention to safety and customer specific needs from all 30 agency personnel. I have observed the maturation of COTA as it moves forward with a new transportation facility and equipment, and find it satisfying to be a part of the measurable progress in the development of their personnel," said Porter. This is Porter's sixth time conducting COTA's certification training for the Transit Authority.

"This year's training and certification opportunity was particularly special because we are able to include transit operators from the islands of Rota, Tinian, and our CNMI Public School System," said special assistant for Public Transportation Alfreda Camacho Maratita.

"In order for COTA to continue delivering safe and courteous transit services for our community, the proper training opportunities should be afforded to the state's transit agency as it continuously expands. The need for this particular type of training echoes the fact that passenger transportation is a service industry. The most important asset in any transit agency or provider are the transit operators. By providing these training opportunities, skills and knowledge are enhanced for each team member which will, in turn, benefit our CNMI community as a whole," Maratita added. ***(PR)***

CNMI PSS: Office of Pupil Transportation's Jesus Nicdao and Nobert Ambalan go through the PASS hands-on testing for wheelchair securement. COTA

Patrick Ogo of Rota carefully uses the wheelchair lift to perform the hands-on testing for the PASS certification. COTA

COTA

Master trainer Ginger Porter M.Ed. conducts the PASS hands-on wheelchair safety securement test with COTA transit operators.

Kaia Lazaro of Tinian undergoes the PASS hands-on training role as a transit rider. COTA

Nation

14 shot at Vegas hookah parlor; 1 dead and 2 critically hurt

LAS VEGAS (AP)—Fourteen people were shot during a party at a Las Vegas hookah lounge early Saturday, including one man who was killed and two others who were critically wounded.

The shooting happened about 3:15 a.m. and preliminary information indicated there was a party during which two people got into an altercation and exchanged gunfire, said police Capt. Dori Koren.

Koren told reporters no arrests have been made and no suspect descriptions were immediately available but that authorities did not believe there was any danger to the general public.

Police went to the hookah bar identified by the Las Vegas Review-Journal as Manny's Glow Ultra Lounge & Restaurant after receiving multiple 911 calls, Koren said.

Officers secured the scene and rendered aid, including applying tourniquets and administering CPR, Koren said.

Investigators were trying to determine the types of gun or guns used in the shooting.

"It's a fairly large scene so it's going so take some time to go through thxe entire scene," he said. "We're not really sure exactly what kind of weapon was used, or exactly if there were two shooters. We believe there was an exchange of gunfire, but we're still looking into all of information."

The medical aid provided to victims by the officers who initially responded "definitely made a significance in this case," Koren said.

Hookahs are water pipes that are used to smoke specially made tobacco that comes in different flavors.

Hours after the shooting, much of shopping plaza where the shooting occurred remained cordoned off by police tape as officers looked for stray bullets and other evidence.

"My thoughts are with the victim, their loved ones, and all those injured in last night's senseless shooting at a hookah lounge," U.S. Rep. Dina Titus, D-Nev., said on Twitter. "We must do more to end gun violence."

AP

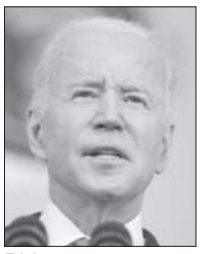
Las Vegas police investigate at Manny's Glow Ultra Lounge & Restaurant, after a shooting, Saturday, Feb. 26, 2022, in Las Vegas.

State of the Union: Biden speech comes amid crises, setbacks

WASHINGTON (AP)—The last time President Joe Biden addressed a joint session of Congress, he said the country was "ready for takeoff" after a period of plague and strife.

It's been a more turbulent flight than expected. Biden is scheduled to deliver his first State of the Union speech on Tuesday night at a moment when he' has struggled to deliver on many of his original promises and as he is being forced to confront new crises.

The gap between the two major speeches—the first one was last April—is the story of a presidency that has repeatedly needed to recalibrate its ambitions.



Biden

Although Biden reached a bipartisan deal on an infrastructure plan, many of his other proposals have been jettisoned or left languishing with no clear path to becoming reality. He followed through on his pledge to remove U.S. forces from Afghanistan, but the chaotic withdrawal left the Taliban in control and a looming humanitarian disaster. Meanwhile the coronavirus evolved into new, more contagious variants that increased the pandemic's death toll despite the widespread availability of vaccines.

And most recently, Russian President Vladimir Putin has expanded his invasion of Ukraine, plunging Europe into war and hijacking Biden's foreign policy agenda.

"These speeches go through many, many drafts," said Michael Waldman, president of the Brennan Center for Justice and a former chief speechwriter for President Bill Clinton. "And I would bet they're starting some new drafts right now."

He added: "Two weeks ago the speechwriters probably thought they knew what was in the speech. Vladimir Putin had other ideas."

Traditionally, State of the Union speeches focus on domestic issues. But Waldman said this one is a chance for Biden to outline the stakes of the crisis in Ukraine, especially as Americans remain wary of becoming involved in foreign conflicts and worry that economic ripple effects could drive up gas prices.

Trayvon Martin's mother: 'Don't give up' fight for justice

NEW YORK (AP)—The mother of Trayvon Martin used the 10th anniversary of her son's death Saturday to urge those who sought justice for her family to continue to fight.

"I never do anything on the 26th, I never even plan anything on the 26th of February," Sybrina Fulton said at the weekly meeting of the National Action Network, the civil rights organization founded by the Rev. Al Sharpton in Harlem.

She told an audience that included Sharpton and Mayor Eric Adams that she wanted to be there to support her supporters. Adams, a New York state senator at the time, was among several Black lawmakers who wore hooded sweatshirts to a 2012 legislative session to call attention to the 17-year-old's death in Sanford, Florida.

Trayvon Martin had been wearing a similar sweatshirt when he was fatally shot on his way back from a store while visiting his father in a gated community in the Orlando suburb. George Zimmerman, a member of the community's neighborhood watch, confronted the teenager and shot him after reporting him to authorities as a suspicious person.

Zimmerman, who told authorities that Martin had attacked him, was acquitted of second-degree murder in 2013.

AP

Rev. Al Sharpton, third from left, president of the National Action Network (NAN), and Mayor Eric Adams, far right, stand next to Sybrina Fulton, center, the mother of Trayvon Martin, as she address a rally commemorating the 10th anniversary of her son's killing, Saturday Feb. 26, 2022, at NAN's Harlem headquarters in New York.

Some Americans welcome new CDC mask guidance, others wary

CHICAGO (AP)—Grace Thomas is fully vaccinated against COVID-19 but still not ready to take off her mask, especially around the kids at the home day care she runs in Chicago.

But whether the children continue to wear masks remains to be seen after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced that healthy people in most areas of the country can safely stop wearing masks as cases continue to fall.

Thomas, 62, plans to ask parents to have their children wear masks to prevent the day care from being a potential source of transmission, but "you can't make them wear masks if they don't want to," she said.

Many Americans, including parents of school children, have been clamoring for an end to masking while others remain wary that the pandemic could throw a new curveball. Now, states, cities and school districts are assessing Friday's guidance to determine whether it's safe to stop mask-wearing—long after others threw out such mandates and many Americans ignored them.

Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker said that the statewide school mask mandate will be lifted Monday in response the the new guidance, although Chicago Public Schools officials said they will continue to require masks "to maintain health and safety measures."

Los Angeles on Friday began allowing people who are vaccinated to remove their masks indoors, and Washington, D.C., had already said it would end its mask mandate on Monday. Washington state and Oregon plan to lift indoor mask mandates in late March.

But the issue still remains politically fraught: Florida's governor on Thursday announced new recommendations called "Buck the CDC" that discourage mask wearing—even though the CDC says the state still has wide areas at high levels of concern.

Christine Bruhn, 79, a retired food science professor at the University of California at Davis, said she'll only take off her mask if she thinks it's safe, usually around vaccinated friends. When she's around a large group of strangers, "I'm wearing a mask," Bruhn said.

"I have been vaccinated and boosted but I don't want to get sick," said Bruhn, who also said she'll continue crossing the street to keep her distance from people without masks if she sees any of them walking toward her.

World

Russian troops enter Ukraine's second largest city of Kharkiv

KYIV, Ukraine (AP)—Street fighting broke out early Sunday in Kharkiv as Russian troops pushed into Ukraine's second-largest city, according to a regional official, following a wave of attacks elsewhere targeting airfields and fuel facilities that appeared to mark a new phase of an invasion that has been slowed by fierce resistance.

The U.S. and EU responded with weapons and ammunition for the outnumbered Ukrainians and powerful sanctions intended to further isolate Moscow.

Russian troops approached Kharkiv, about 20 kilometers (12.4 miles) south of the border with Russia, shortly after Moscow launched its invasion of Ukraine on Thursday. But until Sunday, they remained on the outskirts of the city of 1.4 million without trying to enter while other forces rolled past, pressing their offensive deeper into Ukraine.

Early Sunday, Russian troops moved in and were engaged by Ukrainian forces, said Oleh Sinehubov, the head of the Kharkiv regional administration, who told civilians not to leave their homes.

AP

Ukrainian soldiers stand next to a burnt military truck, in a street in Kyiv, Ukraine, Saturday, Feb. 26, 2022.

He gave no further details.

Videos posted on Ukrainian media and social networks showed Russian vehicles moving across Kharkiv and a light vehicle burning on the street.

Elsewhere, huge explosions lit up the sky early Sunday south of the capital, Kyiv, where people hunkered down in homes, underground garages and subway stations in anticipation of a full-scale assault by Russian forces.

Flames billowed into the sky before dawn from an oil depot near an air base in Vasylkiv, where there has been intense fighting, according to the town's mayor. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's office said another explosion was at the civilian Zhuliany airport.

Zelenskyy's office also said Russian forces blew up a gas pipeline in Kharkiv, prompting the government to warn people to protect themselves from the smoke by covering their windows with damp cloth or gauze.

"We will fight for as long as needed to liberate our country," Zelenskyy vowed.

Terrified men, women and children sought safety inside and underground, and the government maintained a 39-hour curfew to keep people off the streets. More than 150,000 Ukrainians fled for Poland, Moldova and other neighboring countries, and the United Nations warned the number could grow to 4 million if fighting escalates.

President Vladimir Putin hasn't disclosed his ultimate plans, but Western officials believe he is determined to overthrow Ukraine's government and replace it with a regime of his own, redrawing the map of Europe and reviving Moscow's Cold War-era influence.

To aid Ukraine's ability to hold out, the U.S. pledged an additional $350 million in military assistance to Ukraine, including anti-tank weapons, body armor and small arms. Germany said it would send missiles and anti-tank weapons to the besieged country and that it would close its airspace to Russian planes.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE BRIEFS

Ukraine in fierce fight against advancing Russian forces

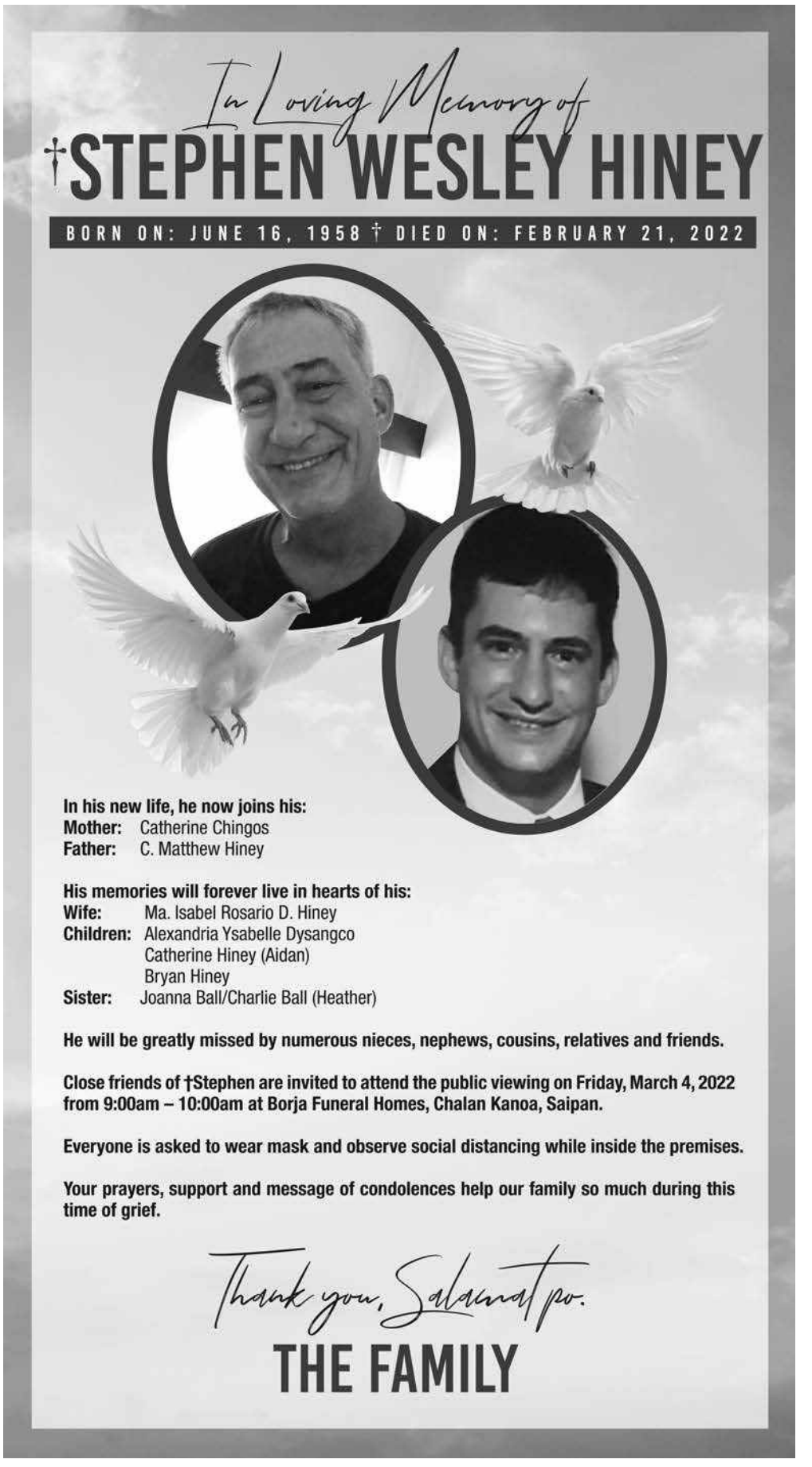
KYIV, Ukraine (AP)—Ukrainian forces put up fierce resistance to slow the advance of the larger and more powerful Russian military closing in on the capital, as the U.S. and EU rushed ammunition and weapons to Kyiv and announced powerful new financial sanctions aimed at further isolating Moscow. Terrified men, women and children sought safety inside and underground, and the government maintained a 39-hour curfew to keep people off the streets. More than 150,000 Ukrainians fled for Poland, Moldova and other neighboring countries, and the United Nations warned the number could grow to 4 million if fighting escalates. Huge explosions lit up the predawn sky south of Kyiv early Sunday. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's office said one of the blasts was near the Zhuliany airport, and the mayor of Vasylkiv, about 25 miles (40 kilometers) south of the capital, said an oil depot was hit. Zelenskyy's office also said Russian forces blew up a gas pipeline in Kharkiv, the country's second-largest city. The government warned that smoke from the huge explosion could cause an "environmental catastrophe" and advised people to cover their windows with damp cloth or gauze.

West unleashes SWIFT bans, more crushing penalties on Russia

WASHINGTON (AP)—The United States and European nations agreed Saturday to impose the most potentially crippling financial penalties yet on Russia over its unrelenting invasion of Ukraine, going after the central bank reserves that underpin the Russian economy and severing some Russian banks from a vital global financial network. The decision, announced as Ukrainian forces battled Saturday to hold Russian forces back from Ukraine's capital and residents sheltered in subway tunnels, basements and underground garages, has potential to spread the pain of Western retaliation for President Vladimir Putin's invasion to ordinary Russians far more than previous rounds of penalties. The European Union, United States, United Kingdom and other allies have steadily stepped up the intensity of their sanctions since Russia launched the invasion late last week.

Fleeing to the border: Over 150,000 Ukrainians seek refuge

MEDYKA, Poland (AP)—Dragging suitcases and carrying children, tens of thousands of Ukrainians rushed to the borders Saturday as invading Russian troops pressed on with their march toward Ukraine's capital of Kyiv. At least 150,000 people have fled Ukraine into Poland and other neighboring countries in the wake of the Russian invasion, the U.N. refugee agency said Saturday. Some walked many miles through the night while others fled by train, car or bus, forming lines miles long at border crossings. They were greeted by waiting relatives and friends or headed on their own to reception centers organized by neighboring governments. The agency expects up to 4 million Ukrainians could flee if the situation deteriorates further.


In Loving Memory of
†STEPHEN WESLEY HINEY
BORN ON: JUNE 16, 1958 † DIED ON: FEBRUARY 21, 2022
In his new life, he now joins his:
Mother: Catherine Chingos
Father: C. Matthew Hiney
His memories will forever live in hearts of his:
Wife: Ma. Isabel Rosario D. Hiney
Children: Alexandria Ysabelle Dysangco
Catherine Hiney (Aidan)
Bryan Hiney
Sister: Joanna Ball/Charlie Ball (Heather)
He will be greatly missed by numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, relatives and friends.
Close friends of †Stephen are invited to attend the public viewing on Friday, March 4, 2022 from 9:00am – 10:00am at Borja Funeral Homes, Chalan Kanoa, Saipan.
Everyone is asked to wear mask and observe social distancing while inside the premises.
Your prayers, support and message of condolences help our family so much during this time of grief.
Thank you, Salamat po.
THE FAMILY

Health & Wellness

This advertorial is sponsored by Tan Holdings HEALTH IS WEALTH Tan Siu Lin Foundation

Know your heart health numbers

(MONKEY BUSINESS IMAGES/DREAMSTIME/TNS)

By CYNTHIA WEISS
MAYO CLINIC NEWS NETWORK

DEAR MAYO CLINIC: Each year at my physical, my health care professional tells me what my blood pressure, cholesterol and heart rate numbers are during the appointment. What do those numbers mean for my overall health?

ANSWER: Knowing and understanding key health numbers—blood pressure, cholesterol and heart rate, along with your family history—allow you and your health care team to determine your risk for developing heart disease, stroke and peripheral artery disease. It is important to review this information every few months, or at least annually.

But what are these key heart health numbers?

First is blood pressure. This is a measure of how hard your blood pushes against your arteries as it moves through your body. High blood pressure occurs when the force of your blood against the walls of your blood vessels is consistently too high.

Your blood pressure reading will fall into one of these four categories:

■ Normal: Blood pressure readings of less than 120/80 millimeters of mercury, or mmHg.

■ Elevated: Readings consistently ranging from 120-129 systolic and less than 80 mmHg diastolic.

■ Hypertension stage 1: Readings ranging from 130-139 systolic or 80-89 mmHg diastolic.

■ Hypertension stage 2: Readings consistently ranging at 140/90 mmHg or higher.

High blood pressure is harmful because it makes the heart work harder and less efficiently. You can have high blood pressure for years without experiencing any symptoms. Fortunately, high blood pressure easily can be detected. And once you know you have high blood pressure, you can work with your health care professional to control it.

The second important number you should know is your cholesterol. This waxy substance is found in all your cells and travels throughout your body in your blood. Cholesterol comes from two sources: your liver and the foods you consume.

Cholesterol can join with other substances to form a thick, hard deposit on the inside of your arteries, making arteries less flexible. Sometimes these deposits can break suddenly and form a blockage that causes a heart attack or stroke.

When you have high cholesterol, you have too much low-density lipoprotein cholesterol, often called LDL or "bad cholesterol," and not enough high-density lipoprotein cholesterol, or HDL or "good cholesterol." There are no symptoms for high cholesterol.

Normal or healthy levels of cholesterol differ, depending on your age and sex:

■ People 19 and younger: LDL cholesterol is less than 110 milligrams and HDL is more than 45 milligrams.

■ Men 20 and older: LDL cholesterol is less than 100 milligrams and HDL is more than 40 milligrams.

■ Women 20 and older: LDL cholesterol is less than 100 milligrams and HDL is more than 50 milligrams.

Your health care professional may recommend more frequent testing if initial results were abnormal, if you have a family history of early onset heart disease, or if you have a personal history of obesity or diabetes.

The third number to understand is your heart rate or pulse.

This is the number of times your heart beats per minute. Your resting heart rate is the heart pumping the lowest amount of blood you need because you're not exercising. If you are sitting or lying down—and you're calm, relaxed and aren't ill—your heart rate is normally between 60 and 100 beats per minute.

Your target heart rate is the minimum heart rate to reach the level of energy necessary to give your heart a good workout. To find your target heart rate, the first step is determining your maximum heart rate.

Your maximum heart rate is 220 minus your age. Your target heart rate for moderate exercise is about 50%-85% of your maximum heart rate.

Many wearable activity trackers can monitor your heart rate when you exercise and periodically throughout the day.

Finally, understanding your family's heart and overall health history is key to understanding your overall risk of heart disease.

Outlining your family health history can help you and your health care professional understand if you have an increased risk for developing certain conditions that are present in your family. If you are at risk, you may be able to take preventive measures to decrease your risk or undergo genetic testing to clarify your risk.

While you can't change your genes, you can control some aspects of your environment, such as diet, physical activity level and tobacco use. That's why it's so important to live a healthy life, regardless of your personal and family health history.

Response by Dr. Abdelrahman Aly, Cardiovascular Disease, Mayo Clinic Health System, Mankato, Minnesota.

How to maintain a healthy immune system

By ALEX OSIADACZ
MAYO CLINIC NEWS NETWORK

The body's immune system protects against bacteria, viruses, toxins and other potentially harmful elements. When your immune system is strong, you may not notice it at work, but when it's weakened, symptoms of illness can soon follow.

Maintaining a healthy body often starts by taking the steps to give your immune system a boost. And this isn't something that can be done quickly.

Between seasonal illnesses and the COVID-19 pandemic, your immune system may be top of mind.

"Return to basic healthy lifestyle principles: Eating well and sleeping, while reducing stress and trying to stay physically active," says Dr. Stephen McMullan, a Mayo Clinic family medicine physician.

DREAMSTIME/TNS

Healthy lifestyles can reduce the risk for certain diseases like high blood pressure.

Your immune system requires care and is not something you can give a lasting boost overnight, so don't rush to the cabinet for pills or powders.

"I think a misconception is that there are supplements or products out there that can really boost the immune system. Unfortunately, they haven't really had robust evidence that they're highly effective," says Dr. McMullan.

Think about long-term adjustments to your lifestyle: a diet that includes lean proteins, seven to nine hours of sleep nightly, daily exercise, and eliminating stressors in your life. The results can help you stay healthy past seasonal illnesses.

"Healthy lifestyles can also reduce the risk for certain diseases like high blood pressure, heart disease, strokes, cancer and diabetes," says Dr. McMullan.

Consumer Health: Reducing your risk of pancreatitis

By LAUREL KELLY
MAYO CLINIC NEWS NETWORK

Pancreatitis is inflammation of the pancreas. The pancreas is a long, flat gland that sits tucked behind the stomach in the upper abdomen. The pancreas produces enzymes that help digestion and hormones that help regulate the way your body processes sugar. Pancreatitis occurs when digestive enzymes become activated while still in the pancreas, irritating the cells of your pancreas and causing inflammation.

Each year, about 275,000 hospital stays for acute pancreatitis and 86,000 hospital stays for chronic pancreatitis occur in the U.S., according to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases.

Pancreatitis can occur as acute pancreatitis—meaning it appears suddenly and lasts for days. Some people develop chronic pancreatitis, which is pancreatitis that occurs over many years. Mild cases of pancreatitis improve with treatment, but severe cases can cause life-threatening complications, such as kidney failure, diabetes and pancreatic cancer.

Signs and symptoms of pancreatitis can vary, depending on which type you experience. Acute pancreatitis can cause upper abdominal pain, which can radiate to your back; fever; and nausea and vomiting. Chronic pancreatitis also can cause upper abdominal pain; as well as unexplained weight loss; and oily, smelly stools, called steatorrhea.

Factors that increase your risk of pancreatitis include:

■ Excessive alcohol consumption: Research shows that people who consume four to five alcoholic drinks a day are at increased risk of pancreatitis.

■ Cigarette smoking: Smokers are on average three times more likely to develop chronic pancreatitis, compared with nonsmokers. The good news is quitting smoking decreases your risk by about half.

■ Obesity: You're more likely to get pancreatitis if you're obese.

■ Diabetes: Having diabetes increases your risk of pancreatitis.

■ Family history of pancreatitis: The role of genetics is becoming increasingly recognized in chronic pancreatitis. If you have family members with the condition, your odds increase—especially when combined with other risk factors.

(DREAMSTIME/TNS)

Smokers are on average three times more likely to develop chronic pancreatitis, compared with nonsmokers.

Life & Style

Kim Kardashian asks court to move forward on divorce with Ye

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Kim Kardashian has asked a court to ignore Ye's attempts to slow down their divorce and end their marriage as soon as possible.

She filed documents in Los Angeles Superior Court late Wednesday saying Ye, who legally changed his name from Kanye West, in his own recent filing, began adding conditions to the divorce that would mean changing the couples' prenuptial agreement, and is seeking protections that are unnecessary and based on falsehoods.

Kardashian said it's clear that he is simply attempting to delay, and is causing damage by doing so.

"Mr. West, by his actions, has made it clear that he does not accept that the parties' marital relationship is over," the court filing says. "Mr. West has disseminated on social media the parties' private communications and misinformation about personal family matters and co-parenting, which has caused emotional distress."

In December, Kardashian, as is common in complicated divorces, asked the court to declare her legally single before the details of child custody and property are worked out.

Kardashian

She said in Wednesday's filing that Ye had agreed to the move, known in court as bifurcation, in advance. But on Feb. 16 Ye objected in in his own filing, and raised a host of new issues.

At first it appeared there would be a smooth end to of one of the most followed celebrity unions in recent decades, between the 41-year-old reality TV superstar Kardashian and the 44-year-old rap and fashion mogul Ye, who were married nearly seven years and have four children.

Kardashian filed the petition for the split a year ago. Two months later, Ye filed his response, which agreed on all the major points, including child custody. Neither discussed the split publicly. A prenuptial agreement prevented property fights.

But in recent months Ye has lashed out on social media against Kardashian, her family, and her boyfriend Pete Davidson. He has aired complaints that he is not being allowed to make major parenting decisions and has been excluded from birthday parties and other events for their children.

In a personal declaration included with her Wednesday filing, she said a judge declaring the two divorced might help with his moving on.

"I very much desire to be divorced. I have asked Kanye to keep our divorce private, but he has not done so," Kardashian said. "I believe that the court terminating our marital status will help Kanye to accept that our marital relationship is over and to move forward on a better path which will assist us in peacefully co-parenting our children."

'Saturday Night Live' opens with tribute song to Ukraine

NEW YORK (AP)—"Saturday Night Live" normally kicks off each show with some humor, but the comedy sketch series opened with a tribute performance to Ukraine amid the ongoing Russian invasion.

The Ukrainian Chorus Dumka of New York performed a "Prayer for Ukraine" during the opening of "SNL" on Saturday. Cast members Kate McKinnon and Cecily Strong introduced the choir.

The choir sang the melancholy tune in front of a live audience and a table of candles that spelled the name of Ukraine's capital city, Kyiv.

Russian troops launched an attack on Ukraine this week. The ongoing invasion involves explosions and airstrikes on the city.

Sean Penn in Ukraine to continue work on documentary

NEW YORK (AP)—Filmmaker and actor Sean Penn is in Ukraine to continue work on a documentary about the ongoing Russian assault.

The Office of the President wrote in a Facebook post Thursday that Penn attended press briefings, met with Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk and spoke to journalists and military personnel about the Russian invasion.

"Sean Penn demonstrates the courage that many others, especially western politicians lack," the president's office wrote on Facebook. "The director specially came to Kiev to record all the events that are currently happening in Ukraine and to tell the world the truth about Russia's invasion of our country."

Penn

He was also there in late November to work on the project, which is being produced by VICE Studios. Photographs at the time showed him visiting the frontlines of the Ukrainian Armed Forces near the Donetsk region.

The Oscar-winner has been involved in numerous international humanitarian and anti-war efforts over the years and founded the nonprofit disaster relief organization CORE in response to the 2010 earthquakes in Haiti, chronicled in the documentary "Citizen Penn."

A representative for Penn did not immediately respond to request for comment. VICE Studios had no immediate comment.

Russia booted from Eurovision Song Contest over Ukraine

LONDON (AP)—The European Broadcasting Union says that Russia will not be allowed an entry in this year's Eurovision Song Contest because of the country's invasion of Ukraine.

The union said in a statement Friday that including a Russian entry this year would bring the competition into "disrepute."

Russian troops bore down on Ukraine's capital Friday with shelling hitting a Kyiv apartment building and pummeling bridges and schools. Hundreds of casualties have been reported since Russia began its assault Thursday. Russia's actions have been widely condemned by world leaders and sparked demonstrations in many cities denouncing Russian President Vladmir Putin.

"The EBU is an apolitical member organisation of broadcasters committed to upholding the values of public service," the union said on Twitter. "We remain dedicated to protecting the values of a cultural competition which promotes international exchange and understanding, brings audiences together, celebrates diversity through music and unites Europe on one stage."

Jennifer Hudson wins top honor at 53rd NAACP Image Awards

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Jennifer Hudson was named entertainer of the year at the 53rd annual NAACP Image Awards that highlighted works by entertainers and writers of color.

After Hudson accepted the award Saturday night, the singer-actor thanked the NAACP for inspiring "little girls like me." She beat out Regina King, Lil Nas X, Megan Thee Stallion and Tiffany Haddish.

"I was just standing here thinking 'It was here – the NAACP Awards – where I watched so many legends and icons that inspired me," said the Oscar and Grammy winner. "Now, I'm standing here holding an award like this. It's because of seeing the Arethas, the Patti LaBelles, the Halle Berrys, all these legends right here on this stand that inspired me."

Hudson played her idol Aretha Franklin in the film "Respect." She was summoned to meet with Franklin in 2007 to portray The Queen of Soul shortly after Hudson won an Oscar for "Dreamgirls."

"Respect" follows Franklin from childhood through the 1972 recording of the gospel album "Amazing Grace."

"This is for Ms. Franklin's legacy," Hudson said after she earlier won best actress.

The awards ceremony aired live on BET in Los Angeles with some talent appearing in person while others watched virtually. There was no in-person audience.

Prince Harry and Meghan, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, were honored with the President's Award. He showed gratitude to the NAACP for welcoming him into their community before he spoke about those in Ukraine impacted by the ongoing Russian invasion.

"We would like to acknowledge the people of Ukraine who urgently need our continued support as a global community," said Prince Harry while standing next to his wife. The couple was recognized for their outreach efforts in the U.S. and around the world.

Family front and center in rekindled relationship

DEAR ABBY: I recently reconnected with an old boyfriend after 30 years, and I'm concerned about what I can only describe as co-dependency between him and his daughter. His wife of 20 years died two years ago after a long illness. He was her caregiver for the majority of those years, along with raising his daughter, who is now 21. He has a granddaughter as well, and they all live together.

When I shared with him that I could only imagine how difficult it must have been for everyone and delicately suggested family therapy, he replied, "Everything will be all right in a while." The majority of our time is spent with his daughter and granddaughter.

I have expressed my concern to him about spending "together time" as a couple, courting one another while we navigate dating, and emotional and sexual intimacy at this phase in our lives. I am also concerned about him letting the granddaughter engage in adult interactions. There seems to be a lack of "healthy boundaries" in place.

Abby, if everything is going to be "all right," as he believes, why do I feel like I'm filling an empty space with no foreseeable returns in this family dynamic?

CONFIRMED DIVORCEE FOR NOW

DEAR DIVORCEE: You and your old boyfriend need to have a frank discussion about what you can expect from this relationship. Certain things are private. Courting and emotional and sexual intimacy should take place away from his home -- preferably on your turf. If he doesn't see the wisdom in that and isn't prepared to compromise, end the "romance" and waste no more of you

■■■■

DEAR ABBY: My brother-in-law, "Harvey," has a filthy habit of chewing tobacco in my home and around my family. He has promised many times to not do it when he visits, but has broken his word every time. The children are grown now, but there are grandchildren.

Harvey is a dirty, unhygienic man who wipes his chew-covered hands on his jeans and leaves a trail of chew and spittle everywhere. He spits into soda cans and leaves the cans on the end table. One time, my 2-year-old tipped it up and took a swig thinking it was soda!

It has been 25 years now, and I'm ready to ban him from my home and family get-togethers. My husband feels pity for him. He and my mother-in-law baby Harvey like a child. I'm ready to lay down the law, and I know there will be hell to pay, but I cannot take this any longer. What do you think?

HAD IT IN WASHINGTON

DEAR HAD IT: Frankly, I think that after 25 years, you're a little late trying to lay down the law to Harvey. You should have put your foot down when your 2-year-old mistook Harvey's spittoon for a soda. Whether you can enforce banning your brother-in-law from your home is anybody's guess, but I suppose it's worth a try if you're willing to accept the consequences. An alternative might be to entertain him only during the milder months when you can do it outside.

DEAR ABBY

By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

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Garfield®

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Adam@home

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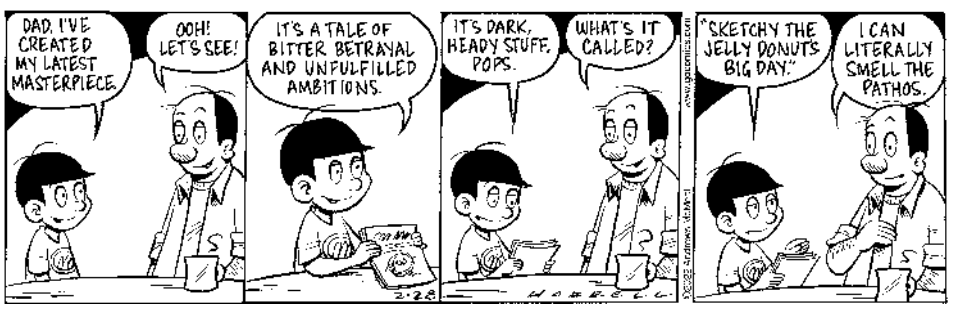
DAD, I'VE CREATED MY LATEST MASTERPIECE.
OOH! LET'S SEE!
IT'S A TALE OF BITTER BETRAYAL AND UNFULFILLED AMBITIONS.
IT'S DARK, HEADY STUFF, POPS.
WHAT'S IT CALLED?
"SKETCHY THE JELLY DONUTS BIG DAY."
I CAN LITERALLY SMELL THE PATHOS.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

THINGS WOMEN LOOK FOR IN A GUY: SENSE OF HUMOR, GOOD LOOKS, STABLE JOB...
...PHYSICALLY FIT, AND A SPORTS CAR.
SORRY, NOTHING ABOUT BEING ABLE TO RECITE THE ALPHABET.
WOMEN ARE WEIRD.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Dorm alternative
5 G-man's org.
8 Scoff
12 Plato classic, with "The"
14 Monster
15 Judge too highly
16 Bar
17 Satchel
18 Capital of New South Wales
20 Non-believer
23 Sofa brand
24 Persia, today
25 Gave rise to
28 Lot vehicle
29 Sports figures
30 Physician's nickname
32 Rich curtain fabric
34 Taj Mahal city
35 Kvetches
36 Collect slowly
37 Colorful season
40 Second person
41 "Sad to say ..."
42 "Hi, sailor!"
47 Russo of "The Intern"
48 Puccini opera
49 Dowels
50 Bordeaux summer
51 On the briny

DOWN

1 Swing to and —
2 Gun the engine
3 Gorilla
4 Sikh headgear
5 Banner
6 Morsel
7 Emulate Lipinski
8 Syria neighbor
9 Novelist Jennifer
10 Toledo's lake
11 Depend (on)
13 Muffin choice
19 Evergreens
20 Photo, for short
21 Spirited horse
22 Teri of "Tootsie"
23 Apple tablets
25 Just sit there
26 Perimeter
27 TV explorer
29 Con job
31 Beer container
33 Burdens
34 Smith grad
36 Spanish artist
37 50-and-over org.
38 Peter Fonda role
39 Tart flavor
40 Days gone by
43 Grass shack
44 Billboards
45 Sock part
46 Greek vowel

Solution time: 26 mins.

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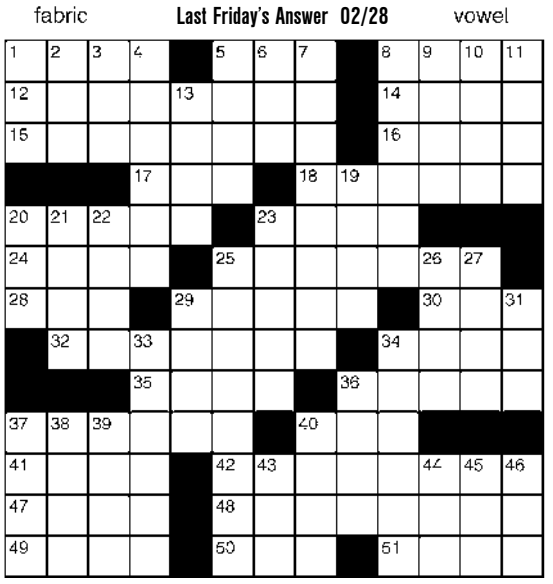
Last Friday's Answer 02/28



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Jason Aldean, 45; Ali Larter, 46; Eric Lindros, 49; Pat Monahan, 53.

Happy Birthday: Take your time. Make decisions based on your needs, not pressure others put on you. Stand up for your rights and what you want. Clarify your position, and don't feel the need to compensate people who aren't willing to do the same for you. Be a leader, do your own thing, and gain satisfaction and confidence. Think big. Your numbers are 9, 15, 22, 26, 31, 38, 45.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Approach others with intelligence and kindness. Clear up uncertainties that stand between you and your goal. Trust your intuition to guide you in a safe and helpful direction. Avoid people and situations that are inconsistent, negative or untrustworthy. ✪✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* When in doubt, take a moment to consider the consequences. Keep your emotions out of your decision-making, and act with kindness when dealing with others. Put your heart and soul into maintaining a good reputation. Live up to your promises. ✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Assess situations and the validity of what others tell you. If something seems too good to be true, take a pass. Rely on intelligence, experience to help make decisions that influence your position. Don't ignore the fine print or details. ✪✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* A change in how you deal with financial, legal or health matters won't pan out as planned. Rethink your options, and rely on your intuition to help you make better decisions. A partnership looks promising. Act on your emotions. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* You'll gravitate toward unpredictable situations. Question anyone or anything that appears to be sketchy or impossible. Don't feel obligated to take a hit for someone's mistake. Maintain balance and integrity, and you will reach your goal. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Be a good listener, and don't rule out using some of the information you receive. You will benefit from the talks that follow if you verify what you hear before sharing the information. Affection will enhance a meaningful relationship. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Reach out to people who share your thoughts and enjoy similar pastimes. Put together a budget and plan that will encourage positive changes at home. Managing your money, time and health with care will pay off. Live, learn and laugh. ✪✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Gravitate toward the things you can do, and put the impossible on the shelf for now. Don't labor over the past when embracing what's to come will open your eyes to a host of new beginnings. Engage in something that sparks your imagination. ✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Learn all you can before you debate with someone trying to take advantage of you. Stand tall and be steadfast about what you will and won't pursue. Keep unreasonable people at arm's length and your overhead low. Avoid unnecessary conflicts. ✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Revisit the way you run your household, handle your cash and head into the future regarding your professional goals. It's time to make a move that puts your mind at ease and gives you the boost needed to follow your dream. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Refuse to let someone unpredictable influence you or your plans. Hold tight and do what's best for you. Practicality will pay off and encourage you to make decisions based on truth. Share only what's necessary until you verify the information. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* A lifestyle change will push you in a direction that sparks your imagination. Using your attributes to help others will encourage new opportunities that give rise to a change in your outlook and financial status. Embrace what makes you happy. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are engaging, changeable and persuasive. You are energetic and helpful.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

	7		3		6		4	
			9		5			
1	3						8	9
5		8				4		6
9	6			4			1	3
7		3				2		8
6	9						3	2
			6		9			
	5		1		8		6	

Difficulty Level ★ 2/28

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Last Friday's Answer

3	2	1	7	9	4	8	6	5
9	6	5	1	2	8	3	4	7
4	7	8	3	6	5	2	9	1
2	8	9	4	3	7	1	5	6
5	4	3	8	1	6	9	7	2
7	1	6	9	5	2	4	3	8
1	5	4	2	7	3	6	8	9
8	9	7	6	4	1	5	2	3
6	3	2	5	8	9	7	1	4

Difficulty Level ★★★★

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

GENRES Solution: 10 letters

H	N	O	I	H	S	A	F	S	E	I	C	E	P	S
H	O	A	R	E	D	R	O	L	E	V	O	N	T	N
T	H	R	I	L	L	E	R	Y	R	B	R	Y	O	G
S	F	T	R	P	I	P	O	S	R	E	L	I	T	N
E	C	I	M	O	C	O	C	O	T	E	T	U	Y	I
M	R	S	L	P	R	E	K	S	V	A	T	T	E	W
A	G	T	I	M	M	B	E	I	C	H	E	S	A	S
G	N	I	T	I	R	W	T	I	E	I	A	O	Y	M
T	I	C	R	E	E	A	F	A	R	C	C	R	R	M
C	T	C	E	M	L	I	T	A	C	Y	H	T	T	U
E	N	D	I	U	S	E	V	D	E	T	A	R	E	S
J	I	N	C	S	R	A	H	S	I	R	I	L	O	I
B	A	E	A	D	V	E	N	T	U	R	E	O	P	C
U	P	L	A	C	I	S	S	A	L	C	K	I	N	D
S	C	I	E	N	C	E	F	I	C	T	I	O	N	L

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Action, Adventure, Anime, Artistic, Blues, Breed, Classical, Classification, Comic, Crime, Fashion, Fiction, Film, Games, Horror, Irish, Kind, Matter, Music, Mystery, Novel, Opera, Order, Painting, Play, Poetry, Pop, Rated, Rock, Science, Sort, Species, Speculative, Style, Subject, Swing, Teach, Theater, Thriller, Variety, Western, Writing

Last Friday's Answer: Nominations

To purchase **WONDERWORD** books, visit www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480.

Irving has season-high 38, Nets rally to beat Bucks

MILWAUKEE (AP)—Kyrie Irving enjoyed this trip to Fiserv Forum much better than his last visit.

Irving scored a season-high 38 points and Bruce Brown sank a go-ahead 3-pointer with 1:38 left in the Nets' 126-123 victory over the slumping Milwaukee Bucks on Saturday night.

This marked Irving's first game in Milwaukee since spraining his right ankle in Game 4 of last season's Eastern Conference semifinals, an injury that helped the Bucks rally from a 2-0 deficit to win that series in seven games.

"It was definitely emotional for me to prepare for this game just because of (that)," Irving said. "I haven't been back in the building since then. I try my best not to wear my emotions on my face or on my shoulders, but sometimes they can get the best of me. It definitely felt like there was a weight lifted just being back here, being healthy, getting the win, knowing that there's a possibility we could see them down the line again."

Irving was playing just his 15th game of the season. He still can't play in home games because he hasn't met New York City's vaccine requirement.

But he's been outstanding the times he has taken the floor. He has scored at least 27 points in each of his last four appearances.

His performance Saturday helped Brooklyn snap a two-game skid and win for just the third time in 16 games. The Bucks have lost four of their last five.

"We got together as a group after the All-Star break," Irving said. "We put some goals on the board, just a daily reminder of what we're gearing up for, just the things that we can control and just focusing on those things."

The Nets, who are eighth in the Eastern Conference standings, need Irving at his best as they continue to play without Kevin Durant and the newly acquired Ben Simmons.

Durant hasn't played since Jan. 15 due to a sprained medial collateral ligament in his left knee. Simmons, who came to Brooklyn in a Feb. 10 trade that sent James Harden to the Philadelphia 76ers, still hasn't made his 2021-22 debut.

Nets coach Steve Nash said after Saturday's game that Durant probably won't play in either of Brooklyn's next two games. Nash said before the game that Simmons is dealing with back soreness while preparing for his return to action.

The Nets were good enough to win without those two Saturday, thanks largely to Irving.

"When you watch Kyrie, it feels like he's in the video games," new Nets guard Goran Dragic said. "It's just crazy how he moves and how he's making those tough shots."

AP

Brooklyn Nets' Kyrie Irving shoots past Milwaukee Bucks' Giannis Antetokounmpo during the first half of an NBA basketball game Saturday, Feb. 26, 2022, in Milwaukee.

Bobby Portis had 30 points and 12 rebounds and made a career-high eight 3-pointers for the Bucks. Antetokounmpo had 29 points, 14 rebounds and six assists. Khris Middleton added 25 points.

The Bucks had a couple of opportunities to come back in the closing seconds.

Brooklyn led 119-116 when Grayson Allen was fouled by Irving while attempting a 3-pointer with 14.6 seconds left, giving the Bucks a chance to tie the game.

Allen, who entered the day shooting 85.7% from the line, made his first attempt but missed his second before sinking the third to make it 119-118.

The Bucks had one last chance with 2.1 seconds and no timeouts remaining. Wesley Matthews threw a long inbounds pass to Antetokounmpo, who had a clean look at a game-tying 3-point attempt that bounced off the rim.

The Bucks went just 25 of 38 on free throw attempts and committed 15 turnovers. The Bucks were outscored 27-9 in points off turnovers.

"We've just got to find a way to be better," Middleton said. "Simple as that."

Irving says he appreciates NBA Commissioner Adam Silver's suggestion that New York City Mayor Eric Adams should look into the city's COVID-related mandate, which requires athletes playing for the city's teams to be vaccinated to play in public venues.

But the seven-time All-Star is uncertain whether any change might be on the way.

"Just remaining patient and just seeing where things end up in this next week or so or next two weeks," Irving said. "I'm not too sure. I know as much as you do."

Silver suggested the mandate was unfair because it didn't apply to out-of-town athletes playing at New York. Adams agreed that there were problems with the rule but said he is hesitant to make a change.

"Great to have a relationship with (Silver)," Irving said. "I know his job is not easy standing in the fire sometimes on behalf of our league. My respect level went to a whole new one for him. I'm just grateful that he did that. He really took one for the team."

Grizzlies 116, Bulls 110

In Chicago, Ja Morant scored a career-high 46 points and Memphis hung on to beat DeMar DeRozan and Chicago.

The Grizzlies hung on after letting a 17-point lead shrink to one and came away with the win after losing two in a row. They also stopped Chicago's six-game winning streak.

Morant surpassed his previous high of 44 points. He scored 20 points in the third quarter and made 15 of 28 shots.

Steven Adams added 12 points and a season-high 21 rebounds, and the Grizzlies frustrated DeRozan even though the five-time All-Star scored 31 points.

That gave DeRozan 10 straight 30-point games, the longest such streak by a Bulls player since Michael Jordan did it in 10 straight from Dec. 25, 1990, to Jan. 14, 1991. But he was 10 of 29 from the field, ending his NBA-record run of eight games of scoring at least 35 while shooting 50% or better.

Hawks 127, Raptors 100

In Atlanta, Trae Young returned to his All-Star form by scoring 41 points and Atlanta rode a dominant third quarter to rout Toronto.

Young was 17 of 24 from the field, 6 of 6 from the line and had 11 assists in his strong bounce-back game. He shot only 3 of 17 from the field in Atlanta's 112-108 loss at Chicago on Thursday night, his first game after starting in the All-Star Game.

Young rebounded by making his first four shots against the Raptors in his fifth game of the season scoring more than 40 points. He set a career high with 56 points at Portland on Jan. 3.

Fred VanVleet led Toronto with 24 points and nine assists after being listed as questionable with right knee soreness. Precious Achiuwa added a season-high 21 points.

Heat 133, Spurs 129

In Miami, Bam Adebayo scored a season-high 36 points, Tyler Herro added 27 off the bench and Miami overcame an early 16-point deficit to beat San Antonio.

Jimmy Butler scored 27 points in 30 minutes to help Eastern Conference-leading Miami improve to 40-21. Butler didn't play in the fourth quarter.

Spurs coach Gregg Popovich remained at 1,334 regular-season wins, one victory behind Don Nelson — one of his former bosses — on the NBA's career list.

Devin Vassell had a career-high 22 points for the Spurs.

Nuggets 115, Kings 110

In Denver, Monte Morris hit a tiebreaking 3-pointer with 28 seconds left, Nikola Jokic had 18 points, 11 assists and 10 rebound and Denver.

It was Jokic's 16th triple-double of the season and the 73rd of his career. His rebound with 19 seconds remaining finished the triple-double and helped Denver to its second win over the Kings in three nights.

He spent most of the night battling Domantas Sabonis, who finished with 14 points and 16 rebounds. De'Aaron Fox had 26 points and 10 assists for Sacramento.

Cavaliers 92 Wizards 86

In Cleveland, Lauri Markkanen scored 23 points, and All-Star center Jarrett Allen had 18 points and 14 rebounds and Cleveland beat Washington.

Washington matched the largest lead of the game at 84-75 on Daniel Gafford's follow shot with 6:39 remaining, but Cleveland answered with 12 straight points, capped by two free throws by Allen to pull in front for good.

Kyle Kuzma made a career-high eight 3-pointers and scored 34 points for Washington.

Celtics 113, Pistons 104

In Detroit, Jaylen Brown scored 27 points, and Jayson Tatum had 26 points and 11 rebounds and Boston beat Detroit.

The Celtics have won 11 of 12 games, the blemish a 112-111 home loss to Detroit on Feb. 16.

Cade Cunningham led Detroit with 25 points. Pistons guard Hamadou Diallo was ejected in the second quarter for pushing official Suyash Mehta when they nearly collided in transition.

NBA BRIEFS

Simmons deals with back soreness as he preps for Nets debut

MILWAUKEE (AP)—Ben Simmons is dealing with back soreness as the Brooklyn Nets' new acquisition prepares to make his 2021-22 debut.

Nets coach Steve Nash confirmed before Saturday's game with the Milwaukee Bucks that the three-time All-Star has encountered "just a little soreness in his back."

"It's not like an injury," Nash said. "It's just kind of like as he's returning to play, his back's flared up a little. It's not like a long-term thing."

The Nets acquired the 6-foot-10 guard/forward along with Seth Curry, Andre Drummond and two future first-round picks in a Feb. 10 trade that sent 10-time All-Star James Harden and Paul Millsap to the Philadelphia 76ers.

Simmons, the No. 1 overall pick in the 2016 draft, hasn't played since the 76ers fell to the Atlanta Hawks in last season's Eastern Conference semifinals. He demanded a trade last summer.

"He hasn't played a game since June," Nash said. "I think that's just a part of his process of returning to play. As you ramp up, you're a little bit susceptible to certain things, as you would be with muscle soreness or tightness."

While speaking to reporters after the trade, Simmons said he hoped to play again by the time the Nets visit Philadelphia on March 10.

Heat's Butler fined $25,000 for violating media access rules

NEW YORK (AP)—Miami Heat forward Jimmy Butler has been fined $25,000 for violating league rules regarding media interview access and for his noncompliance with the resulting NBA investigation.

The league announced the fine Friday, saying it stemmed from Butler's failure to comply with his media availability obligations during the NBA All-Star weekend, including following the game on Sunday night.

A six-time All-Star, Butler had two points and two steals in nine minutes for Team LeBron in its 163-160 victory over Team Durant.

MLB talks produce progress, anger as deadline approaches

AP

New York Mets pitcher Max Scherzer signs autographs for fans following a baseball labor negotiating session Saturday, Feb. 26 at Roger Dean Stadium in Jupiter, Fla.

JUPITER, Fla. (AP)—Major League Baseball negotiations took several steps forward and overcame a possible breakdown after testy talks Saturday, leaving less than two days until management's deadline for an agreement to salvage opening day on March 31 and a 162-game schedule.

While the sides moved toward each other on some topics, they remained far apart on the biggest economic issues: luxury tax thresholds and rates, the minimum salary and the new pre-arbitration bonus pool.

Players were angered by the state of negotiations at the end of Saturday's session and would not commit to extending talks. After internal discussions, they agreed to meet for a seventh staight day Sunday.

MLB says if there is not an agreement by the end of Monday, it would start canceling regular-season games because there will not be enough training time to play a full schedule. Players have not said whether they agree to that as a deadline and could make due with a shorter spring training.

Once Monday passes, the length of the schedule would become yet another issue in the dispute, along with possible lost pay and service time.

The union has told MLB if games are missed and salaries are lost, clubs should not expect players to agree to management proposals to expand the postseason and allow advertisements on uniforms and helmets.

For all the rancor, there was progress that saw the sides align on some issues.

Teams agreed for the first time to credit a full year of major league service to players who finish first or second in Rookie of the Year voting in each league by the Baseball Writers' Association of America, as long as they are among the top 100 prospects and did not spend the full season on the big league roster. This would address the union's contention that teams are delaying debuts of budding stars such as Kris Bryant to delay their free agency.

The sides also agreed the proposed lottery in the annual amateur draft would be for the first six selections. While the union thought it was on the verge of an agreement on that topic Friday, teams angered the union by linking that to players agreeing to expand the postseason from 10 teams to 14, rather the 12 the union prefers.

The players moved toward MLB on salary arbitration, cutting from 75% to 35% for those who would be eligible from the group with at least two seasons of service but less than three. Management says it will not move from 22%, the cutoff since 2013.

With the move Saturday, the eligibility of only about 15-18 players annually is at issue.

Clubs stayed at a $214 million tax threshold, up from $210 million last season, and increased their 2023 proposal by $1 million to $215 million. They left 2024 at $216 million with $2 million hikes in each of the final two seasons.

Teams cut the tax rate for exceeding the threshold from 50% to 45%, lowered the rate for exceeding by $20 million from 75% to 62% and the proposal for exceeding by $40 million from 100% to 95%.

MLB characterized its tax proposal as intentionally lousy, in response to a union tax proposal teams felt was equally lousy.

Players object to the rates as increases from the current figures of 20% for the first threshold, 32% for the second and 62.5% for the third. Clubs say they in turn are eliminating higher rates for recidivist teams that exceed the initial threshold in consecutive years.

The union would raise the threshold to $245 million this year and increase it to $273 million by 2026. It would keep rates of the expired agreement and eliminate non-financial penalties.

While the sides have agreed to the pre-arbitration bonus pool from central revenue, the union wants $115 million distributed to 150 players and management wants $20 million to be split among 30.

The union withdrew its proposal to cut revenue sharing by $30 million annually but kept its plan to give small-market teams an incentive to grow locally generated revenue. The union would have the incentive money designated from central revenue, which it estimates would cost any club no more than $1 million in a year in revenue sharing.

The union proposed to limit optional assignments to five annually. Teams had tied that to a provision regulating the number of minor league contracts, then withdrew the proposal.

Teams inserted a new obstacle to a deal, proposing on-field rules changes could be made with 45 days' notice by a committee comprised of six management officials, two union representatives and one umpire. Currently, management can only change rules with union consent or unilaterally with one year notice.

The MLB proposal would likely pave the way for a pitch clock.

Owners still are proposing an international draft, which the union opposes.

Manfred joins in, MLB lockout talks appear to gain momentum

JUPITER, Fla. (AP)—Baseball players and owners took a first step toward salvaging opening day, nearing agreement Friday on an amateur draft lottery during lockout negotiations that included a surprise one-on-one meeting between Commissioner Rob Manfred and union head Tony Clark.

While an agreement on the draft was not complete, the talks gained momentum for the first time as Major League Baseball's end of Monday deadline approached for a deal that would preserve opening day on March 31 and a 162-game schedule.

Talks will continue Saturday, the 87th day of baseball's first work stoppage since 1995. The sides remain far apart on the big-money issues of the competitive balance tax thresholds and rates, salary arbitration eligibility, the size of a bonus pool for pre-arbitration-eligible players and the minimum salary.

In another sign of the disruption caused by baseball's ninth work stoppage, MLB canceled three more days of spring training games through March 7. Exhibition games were to have begun Saturday.

But for the first time all week, both sides expressed a feeling they had moved in a positive direction.

Manfred had a meeting with Clark in June 2020 during pandemic restart talks that produced disagreement over what transpired and sparked a still-pending grievance over the length of the season.

Manfred had not attended bargaining since the first session of these talks in April. He has a home in the area and had been in the background at the ballpark during the first four days this week, speaking with management officials.

The players' association had not known he was in the area, and Manfred surprised the union Friday when he asked for a one-on-one meeting with Clark.

Manfred then made the short walk from the offices near home plate where management officials had grouped, crossed the small driveway behind the right-field foul pole and entered the building containing the Cardinals spring training clubhouse, where players had gathered. He walked back about 20 minutes later.

The day included three negotiating sessions, a high for any day this week.

In an effort to address the union's claim that teams are giving up on winning in an effort to gain a top pick in the amateur draft, MLB had proposed the top selections be determined by a lottery, such as the NBA began in 1985 and the NHL a decade later.

MLB has offered to have the first four picks determined by a lottery in which the teams with the three lowest winning percentages would have the best chances of getting the top pick. The union asked for the first seven selections to be sorted by lottery.

The sides exchanged proposals Friday on the number of lottery picks, adjustments and penalties, moving closer to agreement on format. For the first time in months of negotiations, there was immediate back and forth: MLB made a proposal, the union caucused and countered, and management is to respond Saturday.

Discussions also covered other areas and were described as spirited and at times emotional.

Management's delegation included Yankees managing general partner Hal Steinbrenner, Colorado CEO Dick Monfort, Deputy Commissioner Dan Halem and Executive Vice President Morgan Sword.

Clark led players who included Max Scherzer, Andrew Miller and Zack Britton from the union's eight-man executive subcommittee.

Players have not accepted Monday as a deadline and have suggested any missed games could be made up as part of doubleheaders, a method MLB said it will not agree to.

Once Monday passes, the length of the schedule would become yet another issue in the dispute along with possible lost pay and service time.

The union has told MLB if games are missed and salaries are lost, clubs should not expect players to agree to management's proposals to expand the postseason and to allow advertisements on uniforms and helmets.

Packers GM: 'We'll know here shortly' on Rodgers' decision

GREEN BAY, Wis. (AP)— Green Bay Packers general manager Brian Gutekunst says he's not giving Aaron Rodgers any deadlines on when to decide on a possible return and he believes the four-time MVP will reach a resolution soon.

Rodgers has said he hasn't made up his mind regarding his plans for next season and hasn't ruled out returning to the Packers, retiring or requesting a trade.

"I think we'll know here shortly," Gutekunst said Wednesday. "I feel confident we'll know that shortly."

Rodgers, who won his second straight MVP award this past season, has said he'd like to make a decision by the time the free agency period starts next month. He wants to give the Packers enough time to prepare for life with or without him.

Gutekunst acknowledges Rodgers' decision will factor into other choices the Packers make as they build their roster for the 2022 season and noted the 38-year-old quarterback is well aware of that.

AP

Green Bay Packers general manager Brian Gutekunst speaks during a press conference at the NFL football scouting combine in Indianapolis, Tuesday, Feb. 25, 2020.

Rodgers said Tuesday on "The Pat McAfee Show" on YouTube and SiriusXM that the postseason conversations he had with Gutekunst, Packers coach Matt LaFleur and executive vice president/director of football operations Russ Ball were much more positive than usual. Rodgers had skipped the Packers' mandatory minicamp last year in a standoff with team management.

"There's a process that obviously we're going through," Gutekunst said. "There's a process that he's going through. And we're very respectful of that."

Gutekunst also was asked about his discussions with Rodgers last summer and if the team had promised to move the veteran quarterback if he wanted out after the 2021 season.

"That was not something I told him," Gutekunst said. "I think the whole conversation with Aaron last season before he came back was that regardless, at the end of this season, this past season, that we would sit down as a group and we would work it out one way or another."

Rodgers' status is the most pressing of several offseason issues facing the Packers, who fell in the divisional playoffs this past season after two straight NFC championship game losses.

The Packers are nearly $43 million over the salary cap according to overthecap.com and have several noteworthy potential free agents, including All-Pro wide receiver Davante Adams and linebacker De'Vondre Campbell.

Gutekunst confirmed that the Packers restructured defensive tackle Kenny Clark's contract and added that "there will be many more (contracts) that we touch along the way." But he doesn't believe the Packers' cap situation should cause them to make major cuts to their roster.

"We have a lot of different options depending on where we head," Gutekunst said. "But this isn't going to be one of those things, it's not a fire sale where we're cutting a bunch of guys."

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia	36	23	.610	—
Boston	36	26	.581	1½
Toronto	32	27	.542	4
Brooklyn	32	29	.525	5
New York	25	35	.417	11½

Southeast Division

Miami	40	21	.656	—
Charlotte	30	31	.492	10
Atlanta	29	31	.483	10½
Washington	27	33	.450	12½
Orlando	14	47	.230	26

Central Division

Chicago	39	22	.639	—
Cleveland	36	24	.600	2½
Milwaukee	36	25	.590	3
Indiana	20	41	.328	19
Detroit	14	46	.233	24½

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

Memphis	42	20	.677	—
Dallas	35	25	.583	6
New Orleans	24	36	.400	17
San Antonio	24	37	.393	17½
Houston	15	44	.254	25½

Northwest Division

Utah	37	22	.627	—
Denver	35	25	.583	2½
Minnesota	32	29	.525	6
Portland	25	35	.417	12½
Oklahoma City	19	41	.317	18½

Pacific Division

Phoenix	49	11	.817	—
Golden State	43	17	.717	6
L.A. Clippers	31	31	.500	19
L.A. Lakers	27	32	.458	21½
Sacramento	22	40	.355	28

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GCA

From Page 20

three-time defending champion Hopwood Middle School 1 in the bottom half of the draw and advanced, 21-15.

That set up a GCA 2-Tanapag finals, which unlike the earlier matches was a best-of-three affair.

It was evenly matched in the early goings of the opening set, as the Tatagas played Fatialofa and company into a standstill and even led 11-10 on their steady service game. It was still 14-14 as GCA 2 fumbled through a couple of errors before Fatialofa personally presided over a 7-1 windup courtesy of her dreaded spikes as the Lady Eagles took the first set.

Tanapag briefly held the lead at 8-7 at the start of the second set, but Fatialofa got some timely help from the receiving corps of Vaniqa Torres, Matty Angeles, Beatrice Fabre, and Nevaeh Camacho to take the upper hand at 11-8. It was 17-13 following a strong service from Llyanna Jairah Libut and GCA 2 made it 18-13 after Tanapag failed to receive a deep shot.

After a momentary reprieve, the Lady Eagles scored the last 2 points with no less than Fatialofa delivering the coup de grace with a couple of hammer spikes in the gut of Tanapag's defense to take the set, the game, and the tourney championship.

The rest of the champion GCA 2 Lady Eagles are Masofia Gomez, Ana Villagomez, and Miley Mafnas.

GCA 2 head coach Cesar Libut, who steered the Lady Eagles to the high school championship last October, said they didn't really expect to come out on top this year and win the school's first-ever title in the middle school level.

"This was just a blessing. One month no practice because it's not allowed in school because of the COVID. Then we planned to practice Thursday but it rained the whole day. We're just surprised that we're able to do this because we had no practice at all, but they're very dedicated to keep practicing just the same."

Just how dedicated? Last Friday, GCA 2 had a scheduled game at 3pm, but they arrived at the venue at 1pm just to practice. And then last Saturday, their first game was 9:40am, but they came at the Koblerville Gym at 7:30am to practice again.

"It's the dedication of these kids and wanting to practice and be the best [that led them to this championship]."

Asked how important was Fatialofa on the team's success, Libut said GCA 2 just had to capitalize on their advantage and with the 5'11" Fatialofa they obviously had a very big advantage.

"Because there's no practice you need to capitalize on your advantage. We have other spikers but no practice at all so what we did to make sure to get the win was let Azzy spike. The switching wasn't easy for her to go in the center there. It's a lot of switching. If you don't switch properly the referee will call us for illegal formation, but that was done inside the hallway of the high school building 'this is how you rotate, this how you rotate…'" he said.

Libut also gave credit to Fatialofa's teammates when he said: "The key is this, Azzy cannot spike without a good receiver. The service was awesome and I was pleasantly surprised. Same with the setting and receiving. I think the best one is the receiving especially in the last two sets, those were awesome. I dedicate the win definitely to the students/players. You should've seen them when we won they were crying. Some of them are sixth graders and some of them are eighth graders. Half of them can still play next year to defend their championship."

Earlier in the quarterfinals, SIS 2 ousted sister team SIS 1, 21-16. Hopwood 1 also punched its ticket to the Final Four after eliminating Francisco M. Sablan Middle School, 21-15.

The 2021-2022 Girls Middle School Volleyball Championships was organized by the Public School System Athletic Programs with help from the Northern Mariana Islands Volleyball Association.

SATO

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3 men and women and Sato was quite impressed how the group conducted the aqualthlon and the 10K run.

"This event was well organized. It was a little bit windy going north was against the wind. It got hot after the sun came out when I was at the 7-kilometer mark," he said.

Sato added although he didn't have much practice recently, he did expect to win the race all along. He, however, added that winning is not really his goal when he races.

"I do not really care whether I win or not. I just want to run faster than last year," he said.

Despite 50 years old, Sato is determined to improve his time in every race.

"Age is just a number. Age has nothing to do with running," he said.

Miller, meanwhile, is just glad to be back in the saddle again following his bout with COVID-19 that left her with a little sore throat. She topped the women's division in a time of 43:58, followed by Evelyn Pangelinan in 52:21 and Rosemarie Chisato in 54:26.

"I was happy to have joined the race today. Last week at the Ekiden my teammates did a great run. It made me want to run also," he said.

The Saitama, Japan native said she had some trouble running near the Garapan Basketball Court with the pedestrian traffic at the Sabalu Market.

"We have to run at the pathway and it was up and down at Garapan. It was little frustrating," said the 52-year-old longtime Saipan resident.

Results of the aquathlon side of the 7th Saipan Aquathlon & 10K Pathway Run, which was sponsored by IT&E and the Tan Siu Lin Foundation, will be published in tomorrow's edition of the *Saipan Tribune*.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Akiko Miller, center, smiles to the camera after topping the women's division run event of the 7th Saipan Aquathlon & 10K Pathway Run.

MAX

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vin Deleon Guerrero, EdD said. "We are also thankful for all the golf players who will be joining us on the golf course on March 19.

NMC's Golf Open will be held on the east course of the Saipan LaoLao Bay Golf & Resort. Showtime is at 6am, and the shotgun start will be at 7am. The tournament will follow a medal play format.

First place winners in the men's Championship, A, B, C, Senior, and Ladies Flights (low gross and low net) will each receive $500, while $300 and $200 will go to the second and third place finishers, respectively. Hole-in-one prizes also include a brand new 2022 Civic Sport Hatchback from Joeten Motors, a brand new 2022 Hyundai Kona N-Line from Triple J Motors, a brand new 2022 Toyota Camry from Atkins Kroll Saipan, and $5,000 from McDonald's.

The tournament will also feature many other items such as raffle prizes like smartphones, hotel stays, meals, and much more.

The college is asking companies, organizations, or individuals who are interested in sponsoring holes and/or for any in-kind or cash donation to help support the CNMI's post-secondary institution. For more information on how to become a sponsor, please call 237-6780. ***(PR)***

Irving has season-high 38, Nets rally to beat Bucks

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Packers GM: 'We'll know here shortly' on Rodgers' decision

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GCA 2 are middle school v-ball champs

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Height is might in basketball and apparently in volleyball too. This, after Grace Christian Academy 2 leaned on 5'11" Azriel "Azzy" Fatialofa and a bunch of good receivers to win the 2021-2022 Girls Middle School Volleyball Championships last Saturday at the Koblerville Gymnasium.

MARK RABAGO

The Grace Christian Academy Lady Eagles 2 players are joined by head coach Cesar Libut, Public School System Athletic Programs director Gross, and Northern Mariana Islands Volleyball Association president Somia Quan after winning the 2021-2022 Girls Middle School Volleyball Championships last Saturday at the Koblerville Gymnasium.

Fatialofa, who a few months ago led the Lady Eagles to the middle school girls basketball tiara, dominated the finals against Tanapag Middle School, helping GCA 2, helped sweep the Tatagas in two sets, 21-15, 21-14. That capped an undefeated run in the two-day tournament for the Lady Eagles as they topped Pool 1 with a 6-0 win-loss card.

GCA 2 faced off against Saipan International School in the semifinals and came out on top, 21-16. Tanapag, which headlined Pool 2 with a 7-0 card, drew

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MARK RABAGO

Grace Christian Academy Lady Eagles 2 center Azriel "Azzy" Fatialofa spikes the ball with her left hand in the finals against Tanapag Middle School last Saturday at the Koblerville Gymnasium.

Max numbers reached for NMC Foundation's Golf Open

Northern Marianas College has announced that the maximum number of players that can register for NMC Foundation's 2022 Golf Open on Saturday, March 19 has been reached. Those who have not registered to play, but would like to be placed on a player wait list can contact 237-6780.

"We are extremely grateful for the strong show of support by the many sponsors who are helping the Northern Marianas College," NMC president Gal-

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NMC

The Northern Marianas College Foundation Golf Open will be held on March 19 at the east course of the Saipan LaoLao Bay Golf & Resort.

Sato, Miller rule 10K of TRAC event

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Kosuke Sato, center, is all smiles after finishing first among the men in the run portion of the 7th Saipan Aquathlon & 10K Pathway Run.

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Kosuke Sato and Akiko Miller were supposed to be teammates in the Inaugural Marianas Ekiden last Feb. 19, but the latter had to pull out after contracting COVID-19.

With Miller sidelined Sato and company were relegated to the non-competitive division of the half marathon relay. Sato and Miller were finally winners last Saturday, albeit separately when the Japanese duo won the run segment of the 7th Saipan Aquathlon & 10K Pathway Run.

Sato, the 50-year-old general manager of Kingfisher Golf Links in Talafofo, topped the men's division of the 10-kilometer run from the Kilili Beach Pavilion to the Garapan Basketball Court and back in 42:04. He was followed by Sildrey Veloria in 43:53 with Daniel Stutzman completing the Top 3 in 48:36.

The Triathlon Association of the CNMI-organized event handed out medals to the Top

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